SHORT STORIES

No. 696.] Week ending May 3rd, 1902. [One Penny.

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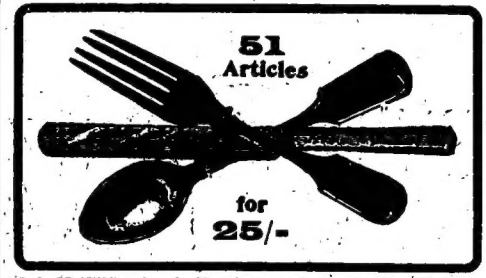

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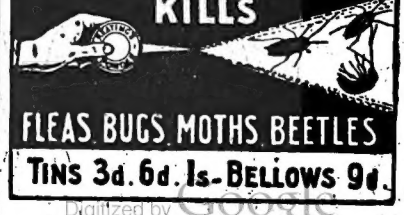

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SHORT STORIES

No. 696.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending May 3rd, 1902.

THE BRAINS OF THE FORCE.

A Series of Detective Mysteries by R. NORMAN SILVER.

THE STRANGE STAIN ON THE TWEED CAP.

CHAPTER I.

The Finding of the Cap.

"OH, please, sir, I was coming for you; my mistress, sir!—she's dying, someone's stabbed her, and the police told me to run for Dr. Shand."

The words were gasped out by a pair of red lips, ripe and youthful, but drawn by the terror that dilated the girlish blue eyes which met the divisional surgeon's own. Lucius Shand, on the way back to his surgery after a round of late calls in the raw gloom of an unseasonable May evening, had turned at the sound of pursuing feet.

He was in a poor quarter of Division B, and the girl who had accosted him, though neat and personable enough, was poorly dressed. She seemed, to the surgeon's acute glance, as if she might be the hardly-worked servant of some humble shopkeeper. Her accent and the singular contrast between her raven locks and sapphire-blue eyes, proclaimed her a countrywoman of his. Lucius Shand began to retrace his steps and the little Irish girl trotted beside him in her loose, badly-fitting boots.

"Who is your mistress?" he asked, striding swiftly through the slatternly street in which he had been overtaken.

"Madame Brest, sir," was the answer, "at the wardrobe-shop further on, sir. I went up just now to her parlour and found her lying on the floor. And I screamed 'Police!' sir, and two of them come and some of the neighbours, and I was sent for you, sir."

Lucius Shand nodded. It was a district on whose "beats" the constables of Division B. patrolled in couples—a crowded low-class residential locality lying off a squalid main thoroughfare of the town. Robbery, jealousy, revenge—these were the motives that, as a rule, prompted its frequent crimes—which, he wondered, would prove the key to this?

At the corner of two small bye-ways was a shuttered, double-windowed shop—a morbid group of curious outsiders hung about the door.

The surgeon pushed through, gained the interior of the establishment, on whose threshold a constable stood sentinel, and strode forward, after exchanging a salute and a rapid sentence with that worthy. A single gas-jet over the entrance to the house beyond, showed that, for the moment, the shop was untenanted, save by Lucius Shand and his escort. It was well stocked, however, with inanimate objects, the racks, shelves and counters around them being piled high with gaudy second-hand costumes, shoes, hats, and other articles of feminine apparel.

Lucius Shand's companion led him past a tiny kitchen, up a flight of dusky stairs, and into an old-fashioned parlour on the first floor. Another constable stood in the middle of the room, near a table laid for a substantial, if solitary meal,—which latter had apparently been interrupted by the event which had brought thither the surgeon and his official colleagues. Close to, upon a leather covered couch, over which there bent two common-place looking women, reclined a third—a woman; tall, brunette, and evidently somewhat advanced in life. Her dress was a black silk gown with yellow ribbons. Those at her bosom were stained with an ominous crimson.

The divisional surgeon went up to the couch, comtemplated its occupant, set his finger-tips to a nerveless wrist, and shook his head. Nevertheless, he made a more deliberate examination before breaking the silence.

"Quite gone," he said, "she cannot have lived ten minutes. The wound must inevitably have proved fatal—it is very deep and suggests the stab of a stiletto. Was she able to speak or move much?"

"Not to move, sir," responded the constable, "not, at least, after I got here. But she did speak, once, and that was to cry out 'Jane! Jane!' and something about 'pity.' They tell me Jane is the name of the servant that we sent for you, sir."

Lucius Shand glanced towards the little Irish girl who had summoned him; she had sunk on her knees at the foot of the couch and was weeping.

"This is, no doubt, what it was done with, sir," added the other, in a whisper, "I only discovered it after we had hurried her off for you—it had been flung down, seemingly, and had rolled under the sofa."

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The form of the observation attracted the surgeon's attention almost more than did the weapon offered to him. It was a thin, polished table "steel," fluted, with a brass hilt and a sharp point; on it was an ominous smear or two. Lucius Shand's gaze travelled from it to the constable's face and back again to the steel.

"Must have been caught up from the table, sir," murmured the police-officer, indicating, with a covert gesture, that piece of furniture. On it was a cooling joint, and, laid in the dish containing this, a pair of horn-handled carvers.

Lucius Shand weighed the instrument thoughtfully. "It would require considerable force to deal such a blow with this," he said, in the same guarded fashion that the constable had employed.

"Quite so, sir," assented the other, "we have notified the inspector at the district station and shall be guided by him. But while you are here, sir, I will seize the opportunity to go over the house more thoroughly than I have been able to do yet. You might keep an eye on the girl, if you don't mind—my mate is dealing with the crowd below, for, of course, the thing spread like wildfire."

The surgeon gave the desired promise and the constable slipped away. By the dead woman's couch her two neighbours chatted glibly in an undertone. The little Irish girl still rocked herself and moaned; her wailing carried Lucius Shand's mind to the days when he was a boy in County Wexford and had heard the "keening" of the mourners from the cottages where wakes were in progress. The "steel" poised in his fingers, he pondered the singularity of the situation and the possible guilt of his pretty compatriot.

When the constable returned, he was not alone. With him entered a spruce, active superior, in the uniform of an inspector. In the hand of the subordinate was a tweed cap, of the peaked variety, soiled and lacking the button on the crown—a few threads marked where it had been.

"Picked up in the yard, sir," he explained, as the surgeon glanced at it after greeting the new-comer. The constable held the cap towards Lucius Shand, a significant thumb planted on one of the cloth sections composing it—near that member was a red smear. The surgeon stooped to examine it.

"Ah!" he said, "well, it may be what you suspect, but I can't express an opinion without testing. The sooner that is done the better."

"Exactly," observed the inspector, with an air of decision, but lowering his voice to a confidential level, "anyhow, I think we shall have to secure the girl. A person who lives in an adjoining house informs the constable below that an hour ago, as he was going up the entry at the rear—it is a short cut to the Grapes Hotel—he noticed this Jane (Jane Donelan is her name) talking with a rough young fellow. Asked if he wore a hat, our informant said, 'No—a cap.'"

The inspector paused to lend weight to this item of news before proceeding.

"She may have let him in," he continued, "while her mistress was at supper or dinner or whatever the meal was supposed to be, and even aided him to do the deed—the deceased is reported to have got out something about 'Jane' and 'pity.'" While the inspector was delivering himself on this explanation he maintained a stealthy watch upon the weeping girl. "Of course, she did call in the police herself, but that may have been done to throw us off the scent. Meantime the fellow was clearing out through the back, with the contents of the cash box Madame Brest kept up here and which was found rifled. Luckily for us, he dropped his cap; that provides a clue and we'll make sure of the petticoat."

He advanced to the crouching figure of the little Irishwoman.

"Jane Donelan," he said, "I shall have to arrest you upon suspicion of being concerned, with some person unknown, in the murder and robbery of your mistress, known as Madame Brest. Anything you say after this warning may be taken down and used in evidence against you."

The girl rose to her feet, horror-stricken, her blue eyes wide and staring. "It—it wasn't me!" she faltered, "oh, please, sir, it wasn't me. She was always good to me; why should I have hurt her? I just came up and found her lying on the floor, and helped her up on to the sofa and ran for the police. That's all I know, Heaven's my witness, sir!"

Her voice broke, she hid her face and began to sob. Coughing a trifle huskily, the inspector drew a pair of linked irons from his pocket and snapped them on her wrists, bidding his subordinate fetch a cab. The women beside the dead wardrobe-dealer shrank from her, startled by this sudden development of the tragedy.

As the constable crossed to the door of the room there was the sound of a hasty tread upon the stair without and a young fellow, hatless and panting, appeared. He was dressed in the rough garments of a working man, a docker or riveter or teamster, and yet had a kind of natural ease and grace about him.

"What's gone wrong?" he exclaimed, "is Madame ill, or it is Janie that's hurt? I couldn't get sense out of the bobby at the front, so I told him I was a friend of the family and he let me past. But I lost my cap in the crush—the street's full!"

He stopped aghast—he had perceived the fettered figure of the little Irish girl. In a bound he had sprung towards her.

"Janie, dear!" he cried; "why is this? Take them off her, somebody; she's innocent, I don't care what she's accused of."

The inspector stepped between them. "Who are you?" he demanded, imperturbably surveying the latest arrival.

"Tom Garside," was the answer, "if it's anything to you—striker at Rollo's boiler-works. What have you put those irons on her for?"

He noticed the couch at his elbow with its sorrowful burden—the body of the dead woman—and recoiled.

"Not that!" he gasped, "you're mad—she's been with me at the back-door best part of the last hour; we're going to be married."

Lucius Shand looked curiously at the inspector, as if uncertain how the latter would act at so peculiar a juncture. That person laid a hand on the shoulder of the young workman.

"Thomas Garside," he said, "you are my prisoner."

CHAPTER II.

The Meaning of the Cap.

"WILL you want me for anything more this evening, sir?"

It was Adam Carter, the divisional surgeon's seedy-looking assistant and dispenser, who put the question. He had followed Lucius Shand into the inner room of the empty surgery.

Lucius Shand looked at the clock over the mantel; the fingers pointed to the second quarter after nine. He reflected abstractedly, then answered in the negative.

"No-thanks," he said, "I have an important test or two to make, and I may as well do it here. But you have had some heavy days recently; take a dose of music-hall or light comedy."

Mr. Carter laughed and went out to extinguish the gas-jets in the ante-chamber and dispensary and don his overcoat. His chief flung off the inevitable ulster, and picked up from his desk an article which he had laid there temporarily on his entry.

This proved to be a rough tweed cap, worn and soiled. It was the one which had been found, earlier that evening, in the yard behind the wardrobe shop of Madame Brest. When his assistant came into the apartment again, Lucius Shand was cutting out a portion of the stained section with a pair of duck-billed scissors. The former contemplated it inquisitively.

"More trouble, sir?" he observed, a kind of admiration in his tone.

The surgeon smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"The eternally recurring problem," he said, "is it or is it not the brand of Cain? Well, I don't imagine I shall get any nearer certainty than the rest of the noble army of experts. If only some genius would discover or invent or both, a reliable test for human blood! But no. Man, the noblest of animals,

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The divisional surgeon went up to the couch, contemplated its occupant, set his finger-tips to a nerveless wrist, and shook his head.

shares his blood corpuscles with the dog and the pig, the rabbit and the horse."

He had placed a portion of the cut-out patch in an inverted watch-glass and mixed in a graduated vessel a ten per cent. blend of glycerine and water. A few drops of the compound spilt skilfully upon the fabric in the watch-glass were left to "soak" it. The assistant lingered, interested, despite his familiarity with it, in the perennial problem of the criminologist.

Lucius Shand next produced a polished wooden box and set up a powerful monocular microscope. Then he got out a diminutive pair of forceps, transferred the fragment of cloth to an oblong strip of glass and, with a rod of the same material, squeezed from it a trace of the reddish fluid. From this he removed the scrap of woollen, placed over the red smear on the microscope slide a thin "cover glass," and slipped both under the microscope and leant to the eye-piece.

For a long time he stood gazing into it. Finally, with a sort of reluctance, he straightened himself, and, fixing an incredulous gaze on Mr. Carter, whistled. Having delivered himself of this practical comment, he returned to the instrument and remained for some moments apparently glued to it. When, ultimately, he withdrew his eye from the lens, it was to lift the microscope on one side, snatch up his ulster, thrust on his hat, and slap the bewildered assistant on the back.

"I was wrong!" he exclaimed. "I shall want you, Carter, the dose of music-hall must wait. Instead, I will treat you to a more novel form of excitement. You shall come man-hunting with me, and man-hunting is tiger-hunting, wolf-hunting, and fox-hunting all in one."

Familiar with his chief's vagaries, both of mood and manner, Carter reached for his own hat, donned it, and allowed himself to be hurried off, out of the surgery and into the night air. As they gained it, Lucius Shand, latching the spring-lock of the exterior door with a sharp pull, the hour chimed from some steeple—ten o'clock. But the assistant scarcely noticed the time, he was so profoundly occupied in wondering why the divisional surgeon had not offered him a glimpse of the microscopic preparation, the study of which had thus singularly affected Lucius Shand.

On the kerb without, his chief halted. "There is a circus in town somewhere," he said, "the question is, where? Let us consult the hoardings."

He strode down the street to a huge erection of planks, plastered over with posters, and scanned them. A tawdry red, white, and blue "six sheet" bill intimated the presence of "Dellegana's Colossal Combination Cirque and Hippodrome."

"Salter's Fields," read the surgeon. "Ten minutes walk," he commented, "we must take a cab—or, rather, the cab must take us."

He hailed a vehicle, motioned the assistant into it, gave their destination, and got in himself. The horse went off at a swift trot—the driver had recognised his passengers.

Lucius Shand lit a cigar, duly inviting his ally to share his case. The brand, if good, was a tremendously strong one—a peculiar taste on the part of the divisional surgeon—and set Mr. Carter coughing convulsively. Before he had grown accustomed to the pungent tobacco, the cab stopped at an earthern pavement in the gutter of a macadam road. Beyond was a spreading darkness—the gloomy void of a brickfield—and, standing out on it, the lighter booths and tall grey tents of a touring circus.

Lucius Shand descended, paid their Jehu, and, with his companion, groped a way across the field towards the principal tent—a lofty marquee. Near this, connected with the marquee by a canvas corridor, was a smaller tent. Towards it, after a cursory review of the prospect, the surgeon bent his steps.

An attendant intervened as he was about to enter. Lucius Shand exhibited a shilling and a card. "I want to see the manager," he said, significantly. The other accepted the coin and the pasteboard, and slid into the tent—to reappear almost immediately.

"Will you step this way, sir?" he requested. The surgeon

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beckoned to his assistant and together the two entered the frail structure, to find themselves in the presence of a little group of performers ready to discharge their various tasks. The lady equilibrist, her gold lace and spangles supplemented by a long and dingy, though once gorgeous cloak, the fair equestrienne, the trapeze artist, the wild beast tamer, were easily to be distinguished among less important "stars." From this tent also, there opened a second corridor of canvas, and through it penetrated occasionally the whinny of a horse, or the hoot of an elephant.

Lucius Shand and his ally had been piloted to the side of a Buffalo-Bill-like personage in a check suit and loose brown sombrero. An air of command sat on his aquiline features, and his grey moustache and imperial, lent him a semi-military bearing.

"Mr. Dellegana?" hazarded the surgeon, with a tactful inclination of respect. His bow was returned with abrupt elegance.

"The same, sir," said the other, "at your service. I'm a busy man, but anything I can do for a gentleman of your eminent profession will be a pleasure, sir, a pleasure."

"I am greatly obliged," answered Lucius Shand, "mine is an odd errand, Mr. Dellegana, and yet I must beg you not to mistake its apparent flippancy. I am a police official, and my business is far from trivial. You have in your show, doubtless, some animal of the camel tribe—the camel itself, or a dromedary, alpaca, or llama. Has any such animal been killed or injured within the last twenty-four hours?"

The manager of the Colossal Combination twirled his handsome imperial.

"A dromedary," he rejoined, "was gored this afternoon by an old bull elephant that grew cranky and had to be shot. Dromedary was dead before we could guess what had hurt him. I guess that meets your case."

"Thank you, yes," said Lucius Shand, "and now one more question. Have you on your staff, by any chance, a Frenchman?"

"A Frenchman! you can take your choice of three" he was told. "There's Monsieur Delacour, the juggler, Monsieur Silvestre, otherwise 'Pompon and his Poodle,' and the Count de la Mort, the great fencer and duellist, who has slain five men in single combat."

"Are any of them——?" And Lucius Shand whispered into the manager's ear. Mr. Dellagana shook his head, then smote his hands together.

"Jerusalem!" he said, "I had forgotten; yes, Pompon. He comes off in a minute. Queer chap, Pompon, not much in his poodle act—he's really a stable hand, but clever with dogs, and I let him go on with a poodle I've got. That dog's a miracle to dance, and Pompon just imitates him and falls about to get laughs. He's chummy with the dog—being French—but a Frenchman can't clown for nuts. He's worse than usual to-night, the dromedary fell on him this afternoon and bruised him a bit. Here he is."

The surgeon sent a rapid murmur in his assistant's direction.

"You can do a regulation twist, Carter," he remarked; "keep your eyes skinned—I may need you."

He moved forward across the tent with the manager of the circus. A ludicrous figure had just entered it—a man in the quaint garments of a Pierrot, with whitened face and cone-shaped hat. Under his arm he carried a shaved and be-ribboned poodle.

"Silvestre," announced Mr. Dellegana, "two gentlemen wish to see you—put the dog down for a minute."

The clown dropped the poodle, which began to sniff at the visitors' heels, and looked about nervously. "I do not know zem," he said; "what do zey want wiz me?"

Lucius Shand made a gesture to his assistant. "I arrest

"Why is this? Take them off her, somebody; she is innocent, I don't care what she's accused of."

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you, Jean Silvestre," he declared, "on the charge of robbing and murdering, some few hours ago, one Madame Brest, of —ah, would you?"

He had grasped the clown by a loose sleeve as the latter turned to fly. Mr. Carter took the wrist of the other arm and brought it sharply behind its owner with an upward and inward tension. The one and only Pompon cringed and bent —he was a prisoner. The surgeon had exercised the right possessed by every private individual under the English law of arresting, without warrant or other legal process, any person reasonably suspected of having committed a felony."

Amazed, the bystanders obeyed his quiet commands, a four-wheeler was summoned, and the surgeon and his assistant marched their captive to it, after permitting him to don a hastily-brought cap and overcoat. The circus performers stared at the vehicle as it drove away—puzzled by the suddenness of the concluded incident, and the absence of uniforms on the part of Lucius Shand and his ally.

When they drew up at the district station, the surgeon, leaving the Frenchman in the care of Mr. Carter and the cab-driver, went to seek out the inspector in authority. He was in his office, studying the daily report book.

Lucius Shand bade him a curt "good-evening."

"Where are your prisoners in the Golconda Street murder?" demanded the divisional surgeon; "the servant and her poor beggar of a lover?"

"In the cells here," said the inspector; "too late to do anything else with them."

"Then," intimated Lucius Shand pitilessly, "you can let them go—I've got your man."

The police official leapt out of his chair.

"What!" he gasped incredulously; "they didn't do it?"

"No," he was told; "for I have the fellow who did—an odd man and occasional clown in a travelling circus. Nationality French, name Jean—J-e-a-n, my friend, not J-a-n-e. What Madame Brest said was probably 'Jean, *ayez pitié!*' —'have mercy!' that is. Also the stain on the cap was not human blood, neither was it that of a bird, a fish, or a reptile. It was that of the camel tribe. A camel was gored by an elephant this afternoon at Dellegana's circus on Salter's Fields. You'd better get my prize in—his other name is alleged to be Silvestre—Jean Silvestre—but the latter may be an alias."

The surgeon's "alleged" was justified of the event. The Frenchman proved to be nothing less than the wastrel husband of the dead wardrobe-dealer, who, having visited her —during his presence in the town with Dellegana's Circus—to demand money, had been admitted by her while Jane Donelan had been so pleasantly occupied at the rear entrance of the shop.

Being refused a subsidy, he had stabbed and robbed his wife and regained the circus in time for the evening performance. But for the camel's blood upon the cap he had unfortunately dropped in his flight by the window of a back room, he might have escaped in earnest.

Jane and her lover were released with honour, and signalised their delight at this unexpected development by getting married forthwith.

On his return to the surgery that eventful evening Mr. Carter had an opportunity of examining under the microscope the oval non-nucleated corpuscles—the only identifiable blood-corpuscle of any species of animal—which Lucius Shand had obtained from the stain on the fatal cap.

"Yes," said the assistant reverently, "I think I should have twigged that much. But what beats me is this—how the dickens did he fill it all out?"

[Next Week: "THE PERFUME IN THE CUT-GLASS BOTTLE."]

The Sale of a Widow.

The Failure of Mr. Perkins' Attempted Murder Case.

Puddleton is an out-of-the-way corner of England which is never likely to be marked on the map because it is so small that until two years ago the late lamented Perkins, constable, was the most important frequenter of the village, and had been for the last six years and more.

There is nothing in this to reflect any discredit on the late Mr. Perkins. If no one better than himself were ever seen in the village street it was certainly no fault of his.

He was a very remarkable man, rather small and shrivelled up perhaps, and the grave responsibilities of his position had silvered his hair at a very early age. His face, as seen under his helmet of dark blue, was the colour of a well-worn kettle that has seen a good deal of the fire, and his yellow, crackling skin was as dry as a wisp of last year's hay.

As he walked he invariably dangled his handcuffs from his side, making them pleasantly click, and in that simple suggestion of official power began and ended the majesty of the law in Puddleton.

But while Mr. Perkins was regarded with much respect by the people of Puddleton, it must not be supposed that Puddleton was anything to him. It was merely a little corner in the district he visited, and for many years it gave him so little trouble that he began to treat it with contempt, and the periodical visits he reported at headquarters in the county town of Leekly, were often paid in his imagination only.

And yet the most interesting case with which Mr. Perkins was ever connected in the course of his long and varied experience was undoubtedly the trial of William Scrace and Timothy Healing for the attempted murder of Sarah Johnson, widow, and in the annals of the Puddleton police reports no event of greater moment will be found recorded, either in the past, or I imagine, in the days to come.

It was Mr. Perkins' boast that whenever he was wanted he was invariably on the spot, and on this occasion at all events the assertion proved correct.

For three days the little constable had missed Puddleton on his rounds, and on the fourth, moved by some foreboding of coming evil, he had looked in at the Half Moon unusually early for his glass of bitter ale.

He was sitting by the open window and smoking, when suddenly Sarah Johnson appeared in the doorway and called him by name.

She was drenched through and through, and the water dripped from her skirts and formed little puddles on the floor. Even her hair was reeking, and she was still rubbing the water from her eyes. Having run a mile and more she was out of

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breath, and it was some time before the constable could make out through her angry gesticulations that an attempt had been made on her life, and that two of the villagers had attempted to drown her in a hogshead of water.

It was a moment for prompt action, and little Perkins did not lose his head. Without even waiting to finish his glass of beer he ran out into the street, and, following at the heels of the widow, he ran until he was out of breath over the rough path across the moor which led to her cottage.

"Look here, widow," he called out presently, "there's no need to run so fast as this. If they're going they'll be gone by this time."

"No, they won't mister," the widow called back, without turning her head and still running as fast as her legs could carry her. "They're both biling drunk by this time. Come along."

The exertion was almost too much for the little constable, but he was glad he had taken the trouble to run when he reached the garden gate and heard the voices of the men.

As the widow had said, they were both the worse for drink, and at the moment Mr. Perkins had arrived they were struggling desperately together on the floor, and Timothy Healing the elder was calling out at the top of his voice: "A pint's a pound! A pint's a pound!"

They made no attempt at resistance, for they were wont to cower at the very name of Perkins, and ten minutes later the little man had them handcuffed and was marching them off, one on each side, to the nearest farm, where he borrowed a cart and drove them over to the downs of Leekly.

The next morning when the magistrate had duly arrived and put up his horse in the White Hart stables he went out into the street and found Mr. Perkins waiting for him there in the midst of a small group of other policemen.

"Any business, Mr. Perkins?" he inquired in a careless way, for he knew that having a glass too much was the worst crime in the district which had been intrusted to that undersized limb of the law.

Mr. Perkins literally swelled with unwonted pride as he put his mouth close to the magistrate's ear.

"I've got a case of attempted murder for you, sir," he whispered.

"Hi! what's that, Mr. Perkins?" interrupted the magistrate, startled out of his usual gravity. "Attempted murder. You don't mean to say so. Come along," and, seizing the little constable by the arm, he hurried off in the direction of the Court.

Perkins solemnly unbolted the door, and the magistrate went straight to the rickety platform at the farther end of the room. He dusted the chair with his handkerchief, and then sat down after carefully parting his coat-tails.

A crowd of loafers followed him into the Court, for such a charge had seldom before been heard in Leekly, and the facts of the case promised to be of startling interest.

In the meantime Perkins had disappeared down below to bring up his prisoners, and a moment later he appeared with one handcuffed on to each arm, and the cheer which greeted his reappearance was immediately suppressed by the magistrate, who rapped his knuckles on the desk, and called out in a harsh, loud voice—

"Silence in the Court!"

The prisoners took their seats on the bench which had been thoughtfully supplied, and surveyed the crowded court with a look of sullen and dogged indifference—nay, even contempt. Their expression annoyed Mr. Perkins.

"If you don't bear yourselves with a meekness becoming to your degraded position," he whispered savagely, "I'll take you both back again to your cells."

This warning, accompanied as it was with a most threatening look, had its desired effect, and Mr. Perkins, with an inward chuckle, went off in search of Sarah Johnson, on whose life the wicked attempt had been made.

She was a tall, gaunt woman, who looked very much as if she could take care of herself under ordinary circumstances. Her hair was crisp and black, and almost matched the colour of her eyes, save when she turned them on the prisoners, for then they filled with a flood of passion, and shone with a deep red light.

Mr. Perkins courteously produced a chair for her accommodation and then, after clearing his throat three or four times, and looking round the room over the rims of his eye-glasses, which balanced in a marvellous way on the tip of his nose, he rose and addressed the Court.

"Your Wuship," he said, "this here is the most extraornary case that it has ever been my misfortune to bring before the Court. Yesterday those two men there, who for dirty and defiant raggedness there ain't much to choose between, did combine together and unlawfully attempt to take the life of this here poor widow. The attempt on the life of the lady was one of the most diabolical and peculiar ever recorded in the annals of crime.

"I must tell your Wuship that Timothy Healing there, who seems to have been the instigator of the villainy, is, or was, engaged to be married to the plaintiff. This makes the commission of the crime ten times worse. Yesterday the aforesaid Timothy Healing, in company with this here William Scrace, entered the house of this here Saree Johnson, and induced her by some means unknown to enter a tub of water——"

A roar of laughter interrupted Mr. Perkins, which was again suppressed by the magistrate.

"Induced her to enter a tub of water," repeated the constable, with impressive dignity. "She being therein, this here Timothy Healing, accompanied by the aforesaid William Scrace, did feloniously, violently, and by force of arms seize her by the hair of her head, duck the same under water, and hold it there with intent to injure, meaning thereby to deprive her of life and the means of breathing air."

"Would you mind repeating that, Mr. Perkins?" said the magistrate, who was now thoroughly aroused.

The constable was vexed at the request, but nevertheless he complied, albeit with very bad grace. He then asked if he might call the plaintiff.

"Stand up on that there chair, Saree!" he called out.

All eyes were turned upon the woman, who, shaking her scraggy fists in the direction of the prisoners, mounted the chair, and, with her arms folded before her, waited to state her case and to obtain justice. As a study in faded brown, her antique gown and weather-beaten face could hardly have been rivalled.

"Mrs. Johnson," inquired the magistrate, suppressing a smile at her weird appearance, "do you recognise these two men?"

"Don't I?" remarked the plaintiff curtly.

"You mustn't speak like that to his Wuship," said Mr. Perkins, in a horror-stricken voice.

"I shall!" said the widow, with rasping emphasis.

"No you won't!" said Mr. Perkins, turning red in the face, and seizing her arm.

"Yes I will!" shouted the infuriated female, shaking, "If you don't let go——"

A scrimmage seemed imminent, when the magistrate sternly interfered, and order was restored.

"Is it true that Mr. Timothy Healing was your affianced husband?" he asked, after an impressive silence, which was meant as a rebuke to Mr. Perkins.

"It is. And a dirty, good-for-nothing scamp he is."

"And William Scrace?"

"He's another. A pair of vile——"

"These comments are uncalled for," said the magistrate severely.

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"Then what did you ask me for?" said the widow.

Mr. Perkins was delighted at this.

"Result of not checking her in time," he said to himself so loud that it was heard all over the Court and by the magistrate, who thought it best to ignore the remark altogether.

Sarah was then called upon to state her case.

"I was a-cleaning my boots for Sunday," she began without a moment's hesitation, "when in comes these two men. Healing, he seemed as if he'd had enough to drink, so I wouldn't kiss him, and William Scrace there was much about the same.

"'Saree,' says he, persuasive like, 'd'ye want to earn five shillings, old gal?'

"Now, I know 'd his pockets were full for he had just sold his litter of little pigs. 'Yes,' says I.

"'Then fill that there tub with water,' says he.

"'All by myself?' says I.

"'Yes,' says he.

"Well, I started running backwards and forwards from the well, and Tim he stood by with Will Scrace there, both of them drinking out of one bottle so contumacious like that you couldn't tell which was which.

"Maybe I went to the well fifty times, maybe a hundred before that tub was full. Timothy kept going up to it and looking in suspicious like. 'Fill it right full, old gal,' says he.

"'What for?' says I.

"'Never you mind,' says he.

"Presently I had that barrel full and running over. 'There you are,' says I.

"First Timothy he looks in, and then Will Scrace came and had a look.

"Tim seemed satisfied. 'Do you want to earn another five shillings, old gal?' says he.

"'Of course,' says I.

"Then before I knew what was what, they seized me round the waist and soused me right in that tub, your Wuship. I hollered as loud as I could. 'Her head goes too,' said Timothy. 'Of course it does,' said Will, and then they ducked me right underneath, and I swallowed as much water as a bucket holds, and was all a bubbling like a kettle on the boil.

"Then they was scared and let me up, and I hollered again, and just broke away and ran all the way to the village, and got Mr. Perkins, and he came and found them fighting, and arrested them. So now you know."

Looks of incredulity and utter amazement were exchanged all over the Court. The magistrate was entirely puzzled.

"It's a most extraordinary case," he said. Then he called Timothy Healing.

"Is it true that you were engaged to Sarah Johnson?" he asked.

"Worse luck," said Timothy shortly.

"And is this charge made against you also true?"

"You wouldn't ask if you'd seen the old gal when she got out of that there tub," said Timothy with a chuckle. "But I never meant to drown her, your Wuship. I didn't, straight."

"If you can prove that, do so," said the magistrate gravely.

"I was tight that night, your Wuship."

At this William Scrace suddenly seemed to take an interest in the proceedings for the first time.

"I was tight, too," he said with a smile of satisfaction.

"In fact we shouldn't be far wrong if we said you were both tight," interrupted Mr. Perkins.

"That's it," said the prisoners in chorus.

"By the expression 'tight' do I understand you to mean intoxicated?" asked the magistrate with a frown.

"Quite right, your Wuship," remarked Will Scrace emphatically. Then he brought his hand down on the rail before him with a bang. "Look here, your Wuship, here's how it was. Tim, he came round to my place that day and I could see he had been drinking worse than usual. 'Sold those little pigs of his,' thought I. 'P'raps he's going to stand me a drink,' and I asked him in friendly like.

"Then he set down and began to cry. I'm like that, gentlemen, often as I have seen that man drunk, whenever he sets down to cry I just can't stand it.

"'What, haven't you sold your little pigs then, mate?' says I.

"'Yes,' says he.

"'Then why are you crying?' says I.

"''Cause I'm such a lazy good-for-nothing drunkard,' says he. 'I'm engaged to Widow Johnson, and I'm not good enough for her. I just ain't fit to marry no respectable woman,' says he; 'and, besides, I've just sold my litter of little pigs,' says he; 'and I want to go up to London, and there's another girl up there,' says he, 'I might take up with if it wasn't for the widow. And I don't want to break Saree's heart, being a shiftless, worthless fellow as I am.'

"'Then why don't you break it off with Saree,' said I to him. 'If she wants to chuck you on account of your worthlessness there ain't no difficulty about that, is there?'

"'But she don't want to chuck me,' says he.

"'Then it's you wants to chuck her?' says I.

"'Well,' says he, 'that wasn't what I set out to say, but we'll let it stand as you put it in that way.'

"Then there was a silence, and he broke out a-sobbing again.

"'Look here,' I said, 'if you feel like that I'll take Saree from you.'

"Then he sits up straight and stops crying all of a sudden.

"'No, you won't,' he says.

"'And why not?' says I.

"'Not unless you pay for her,' says he. 'This ain't no playing, this is business. Give me eightpence a pound and you shall have her.'

"'Done,' says I, not thinking like.

"Then we remembered in Puddleton there weren't no scales to weigh her with, nor within ten miles either. So we set a-thinking for a time and Bill there he made a suggestion real clever. He is clever sometimes when he is drunk, is Bill.

"'Look here,' he hollered out, 'a pint's a pound, ain't it?'

"'Yes,' said I, 'a pint's a pound.'"

"'Then, we'll fill a tub with water, and put old Saree in,' says Tim. 'For every pint that overflows you'll have to pay me eightpence.'

"'Go on,' says I. 'How 're you going to measure spilt water? There ain't no way of doing it.'

"'Where was you dug up?' says he. 'When we takes the lady out we'll fill the hogshead up again, and every pint that you put in you pays me for.'

"Well, we went round to the house, and you know the rest of the story, your Wuship."

* * * * *

"Mr. Perkins," said the magistrate, severely, "this is no case to bring before the Court." And thereupon he got up and the Court adjourned for refreshments.

Arthur Merrian.

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JACK WYNN'S CONFESSION.

A Story of Some Stolen Diamonds.

Miss Russell, from her position on the pavement, gazed up at the shuttered windows with a look of perplexed disappointment in her great, dark eyes. The shadows had begun to creep down the quiet street, with its double row of high, red brick houses; the trams that went gliding by the distant corner were crowded; a newsboy passed with a bundle of sporting extras under his arm; a man entered the house opposite with a latchkey, and the echo of the closing door reverberating through the length and breadth of the street added to the girl's sense of utter loneliness. She placed one tiny, russet-shod foot on the lower step as though she meant to ascend, glanced up once more at the frowning portal, and, turning sharply, walked away in the direction of Hyde Park.

Miss Russell was annoyed. When, half an hour previously, she had reached Victoria just in time to see the last train for Milton (where the Russells' country house was situated) move out, she had consoled herself with the thought that her Aunt Caroline had returned from the North a fortnight ago, and that with her she would be most welcome to stop till morning. It was, however, her Aunt Caroline's window that was boarded, and as she walked away she was turning over in her mind the few expedients that presented themselves. Though it was late in the season, everybody was still out of town.

The idea of taking a room herself at a hotel did not appeal to her favourably. She had never been at a hotel alone, and the thought of it was much more forbidding than of passing the night in the empty family residence, which, after all, was only a few streets away, and the keys of which were in the little silver-mounted satchel that hung at her belt. She could get along very well without dinner, she told herself, for she had lunched late, and, moreover, the excitement had taken away her appetite, and she had a headache.

She stopped at a telegraph office to send a message home, fearing that the family would be uneasy over her non-appearance, and when she came out night had fallen. She hurried on now, full of nervous dread. There were few people about, but in each one she saw a possible enemy. Presently she heard footsteps behind her, and she quickened her pace. The footsteps came nearer, and with fast-beating heart she slackened her pace that the person might pass her. The next moment she was rudely jostled to one side. When she recovered herself a young man, with hat in hand, was making the most profuse apologies.

"I beg ten thousand pardons," he was saying. "It was really very stupid of me—very. I was deep in thought, and did not see you. I trust I did not frighten you very much. I am sure I am exceedingly sorry."

Miss Russell looked up at him for the first time. Then a sudden revulsion of feeling swept over her.

"Jack!" she cried; "I am delighted."

"Nan!" he exclaimed. "What on earth are you doing in town at this hour alone?"

"Oh, what a fright you gave me, Jack," she pursued. "I thought it was some horrible drunken man. I don't think I was ever so thoroughly alarmed in my life. And to think it was only Jack Wynn!"

"But you haven't answered my question, I thought you were going to be away until Whitsun, at all events."

"We are," she answered, now thoroughly composed once more. "I just ran up for the day to get my diamonds from the Safe Deposit Company for Mollie's dinner to-morrow. Then I had some shopping to do, and I missed my train."

"And the diamonds?" asked Wynn, somewhat irrelevantly.

"Oh, they're here," Nan answered, tapping the little bag at her waist.

"No wonder you were frightened when I jostled you. What a risk you ran—alone in the streets after dark, with several thousand pounds' worth of precious stones in a position to be snatched from you by any footpad."

"I never thought of that," she said nonchalantly; "but I suppose there was danger. However, now that I have a protector all fear has fled."

"Where are you going, may I ask?" the young man queried.

"Home."

"But I thought the last train had gone?"

"It has; I mean to our house in the Park."

"Who is there?"

"No one. I shall be quite alone."

"Then you must not go," Jack determined. "I will not hear of such a thing; it is madness. You shall come with me. Mother will be delighted to see you, and it will be much better."

Miss Russell, however, was determined. She thanked him for his kindness, but declared that she could not think of imposing herself upon his mother. She was not at all timid, she said. There were heavy locks and burglar-proof bolts on the doors, and she would feel entirely safe.

"Have you dined?" her companion asked at length, seeing that all his arguments were vain; and when she admitted that she had not, he marched her to a not distant restaurant and ordered dinner for two.

"And now," he said, authoritatively, when they had finished their coffee, "since you insist on sleeping in that empty house, I am going there with you to look over it and see that every door and window is secure. Indeed, I have half a notion to sit all night on the front steps to guard the premises."

She laughed at his fears.

"If you go on like that, Jack," she asserted, smilingly, "you will succeed in making me as timid as you are."

* * * * *

The confidence that Miss Russell placed in Mr. Wynn was born of long acquaintance. They had been children together in Ireland, where their fathers' estates adjoined, and later, in London, they had been thrown much with each other in Society. The elder Wynn had lost most of his fortune before his death, and it was currently reported that his widow and Jack were in anything but affluent circumstances. The young man had a position in a stockbroker's office, and he and his mother lived in a flat near Sloane Square. Fear of causing Mrs. Wynn embarrassment was Nan's chief reason for refusing the son's proffered hospitality. She had known her in her husband's most prosperous days, and she did not care to magnify the contrast of her present position by reminding her of the past.

Jack was very good indeed, Nan thought, when at last he had departed, and she was alone in the great house. He had gone carefully over it from garret to basement, he had examined the window fastenings, and had tested the locks and bolts on the doors. He had, moreover, looked into cupboards and under beds to assure himself that there were

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no marauders lurking there ready to spring forth and do damage so soon as his back was turned. All this, she told herself, he had done out of sheer kindness of heart, and yet the effect had not been precisely what he must have desired.

Instead of putting the sole occupant of the dwelling at her ease, his own solicitude had made her nervous, and as, having bidden him good-bye at the door and turned the key in the lock, she ran lightly up the broad, softly-carpeted staircase to her room, her own shadow, projected ahead of her by the hall light which she had purposely left burning, caused her to start in affright, and set her heart beating wildly.

Once inside her own bed-chamber, she closed the door and would have locked it, but to her surprise there was no key there. The door leading into her boudoir, she found, was likewise without a key, and as it opened outward the device of rolling a piece of furniture against it was not of service. The entrance from the passage-way to her boudoir was guarded only by a curtain, she remembered, as, at her own request the door had been taken from its hinges and carried off to the lumber room. This, of course, was not calculated to add to Miss Russell's peace of mind, but she put as bold a face on the situation as was possible, and began leisurely to undress.

She had loosened the coils of her dark hair, and, standing before her mirror, was combing out the long, shining tresses, when there came to her ears what sounded to her like a stealthy tread on the stairs leading up from the hall below. For a moment she stood transfixed, her raised hand still grasping the comb, and the reflection that the mirror gave was that of a beautiful statue rather than of breathing flesh and blood.

She listened intently, her nerves and senses tense, for the slightest sound. The silence of the tomb prevailed. She told herself that it was her imagination, and, growing bolder, walked to the door, opened it and peered out into the hall. The place was still as death. She leant over the banisters and looked down. Everything below was precisely as she had left it, not fifteen minutes before.

Returning to her room, she finished combing her hair, and, completing her disrobing, she turned the light down to a mere glimmer, and crept in between the sheets. For an hour or more she lay awake listening. Once she was startled by what sounded, in the stillness, like the report of a pistol, but which, she reasoned with herself, was merely the cracking of a piece of ill-made furniture in its process of warping. Once the echo of a rumbling cart sounded like distant thunder; and then, at intervals, she heard a little scratching sound that she fancied must be made by mice between the walls and the plaster. At last she fell into a doze, from which, some time later, she awakened with a start, and the realisation that someone was in the room with her.

The light that she had lowered to a mere spark had been turned up to a half blaze, and by its aid she distinctly saw, standing before her dressing-table, its back towards her, a figure that at once impressed her as marvellously familiar. In an instant her every sense was alert. She sat bolt upright, and in a voice in which intense fright and bewilderment were mingled in equal proportions, she cried—

"Jack!"

Instantly the room was in darkness.

* * * * *

When Miss Russell opened her eyes the bright sunlight of a September morning was streaming in between the parted curtains. With her waking came the remembrance of what seemed to her to have been a horrible nightmare. The incidents of the night of terror came back to her in a confused jumble, and as she separated them one from the other, and gave each a place, the recollection of the suddenly extinguished light was the last of the series. Instinctively her eyes sought the gas jet. A tiny blue flame was flickering in the breeze from the half-opened window; and the girl was thus assured that what seemed to her a terrible reality was, after all, only a most unpleasant dream.

Her silver-mounted chatelaine bag was lying where she had left it on the dressing-table. There was no doubt then that the diamond necklace, the wo diamond stars, and the diamond and ruby butterfly, for which she had come up to town, were quite safe. It was idle, she thought, to look at them, but then the dream was so vivid, that she ran across the room and snatched up the satchel nervously. The mere possibility of those jewels having disappeared sent a cold chill through her very marrow. With trembling fingers she pressed the spring, and the clasp flew back.

In the satchel was a lace-bordered handkerchief. Otherwise it was absolutely empty!

* * * * *

The most energetic efforts of the London detective department failed to find any trace of the missing jewels. Mr. John Wynn, with whom Miss Russell laughed merrily over her curious dream, entered heart and soul into the chase on his own account, declaring jovially that he felt in duty bound to relieve himself of the suspicion under which he knew that she laboured. Moreover, he was anxious to ascertain, if possible, how any thief could have entered or have been secreted in that house, in view of his own most thorough precautions and search.

Although the endeavours of Mr. Wynn were as unavailing as those of the detectives, his reward was considerably greater. Miss Russell, anxious to show him how deeply she appreciated his interest, admitted, when he asked her, that she had always cared a great deal more for him than any other man, and was quite willing to become his wife.

Wynn's financial condition in the past year or two, had, it was generally admitted, very considerably improved. He had been most lucky in certain speculations, had become a member of the Stock Exchange, and was looked upon as one of the shrewdest of business men. Under these circumstances Mr. Russell could find no fault with him as a prospective son-in-law, and his consent to the engagement was very easily obtained.

The cards for the wedding had been out a week, and presents were coming in by dozens. Jack was busy one day cutting strings, while Nan was undoing paper wrappings. Suddenly the girl uttered a shriek.

"What on earth is the matter?" cried Mr. Wynn, rushing to her.

"Look!" she cried, holding up a jewel-case that she had just opened. "Look! They are the lost diamonds; all of them, every one, from the necklace to the ruby butterfly."

Mr. Wynn gazed in amazement.

"Where's the card?" he asked. "Who brought them?" A search was made at once, but no card was to be found. A boy had brought the parcel, but he was a uniformed messenger boy, and there was no way of tracing him. The mysterious reappearance of the stolen gems was a nine days' sensation. Everybody in Society was talking about it, and the newspapers made a column story of it with display heads.

Then, just as it was about to die a natural death, a new sensation took its place. Mr. and Mrs. Wynn's honeymoon tour had come to a sudden end. The bride had come home to her father, and the bridegroom had sailed for Genoa on the *Fuerst Bismarck*. Some people said that divorce proceedings would be begun at once; but no one knew the cause. There were rumours by the hundreds, one as false as another, for not a soul guessed the truth.

The truth was this:

When the rupture came the bride and bridegroom were in Sicily. Jack had been making confessions. The balmy atmosphere, the moonlight nights, the rippling waters of the island, all were conducive.

"I feel," he said, "that I shouldn't have a single secret that you do not share, sweetheart!"

"Oh, Jack!" Nan protested, "you mustn't have. I am your wife, you know, and I have a right to know all about you—everything you've ever done. Have you been awfully wicked?"

"Awfully!" Jack answered, laughing, as he drew her closer to him, and kissed her upturned, expectant lips.

For a moment the man was silent.

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"I'll tell you," he went on at last. "Do you remember that day you missed your train, and I met you in Hyde Park—ran into you—nearly upset you?"

"Do I remember it? Of course I do. It was really the beginning of our courtship."

"I was mad that night. If I hadn't met you I should have killed myself. I couldn't see a day ahead. There was a prison staring me in the face."

"Oh, Jack!"

"I had borrowed money that I had no right to borrow. I had—bah! I had not borrowed it, I had stolen it, because I was over my head in speculation, and the market was going against me. The next day it must have been discovered, and—Heaven help me if it had!—disgrace, ruin, and all the rest of it."

Nan lifted her head from his shoulder and sat silently gazing out over the moonlit waters of the lake.

"You saved me!" he said passionately. "Those diamonds of yours. They were a rope thrown to a drowning man. I wanted you to come home to my mother's. It would have been so easy then; but you wouldn't, and I had to devise some other way. When I went over the house to make everything safe and secure I left an area shutter open. I——"

The bride rose suddenly to her feet.

"Stop!" she cried, in a voice that silenced him instantly.

"Nan!" he cried, and his fingers touched her arm.

She shook them off as though they had been a leper's.

"Don't touch me!" she almost shrieked; "*I despise you!*"

J. M. B.

THE ONLY WAY.

How "Absence Made the Heart Grow Fonder."

She was not an ordinary girl, of that there could be no mistake. She was not exactly pretty, although her face was winning and sweet, but she had a way with her that was purely original. Even her walk and the turn of her head seemed different from that of other girls.

"I don't understand her," said her masculine friends. "I don't like her," declared the members of her own sex, while the matrons of her clique put their heads together and said that it was a pity the girl had such odd little ways, she was spoiling all her chances, and that a woman with her ideas was quite a failure so far as matrimony was concerned.

As for Hugh Dornay, he didn't know exactly what to make of her. She fascinated him. When she was in the room he was always by her side. He walked with her, he talked to her, and never glanced at another girl when she was near, yet he never seemed able to form a decided opinion of her.

One day he told her as much himself. He had called on her and found her alone. He confessed as they sat over the tea table together that she was altogether a puzzle to him.

"I can't make up my mind whether I like you or not, Miss Withers," he said. "You are such a changeable girl."

"I am not sure whether that is altogether complimentary," returned the girl, in a low voice. "I am a good deal more positive in my regard for you."

"Indeed!"

"Yes." She looked away for a minute and then brought her eyes quickly to his face, a pink spot burning on each cheek. "Yes, I love you."

The young man gasped and nearly dropped the teacup he held, in his amazement. Was there ever such a startling confession? Of the two he was far the more embarrassed.

"You are surprised," went on the girl, hurriedly. "So was I. Love is always a surprise. To me it seems a kind of madness while it lasts, something as uncontrollable as it is mysterious. I have never felt like this for anyone before; I cannot understand it myself. You are a very ordinary man, not very wealthy, not very clever, not at all good looking, and yet I love you. It's all very wonderful, isn't it?"

The man stared at her dumbly, unable to say a word.

The girl laughed musically.

"It's rather an unusual confession, isn't it?" she said. "Rather unasked, too; but you needn't alarm yourself—I don't want to marry you."

"You don't want to marry me?" echoed the man in some confusion.

"No." The girl looked away, and her eyes wandered to the window with a thoughtful, intent expression. "I always liken love," she said, "to a stream running between two very different pieces of land connected by a bridge. On the one side everything is bright and green and sunny, on the other the land is grey and barren. Love, the river, runs on either side alike, but once the bridge is crossed the current seems to change.

"From the other bank the sun shines across and makes it all seem so attractive. We long to go and explore, and when we do we find ourselves imprisoned. The bridge we crossed has gone; it was only a bridge of illusion, and there is no getting back to the flowers and sunshine, however much we strive. It's all very disappointing, isn't it?"

The young man recovered himself and glanced admiringly across at the serious little speaker. She was looking quite pretty; the flush had deepened on her cheek and her eyes were soft and moist with feeling. He forgot her strange confession, and for the time was carried away by the power of her fascination. A man, he thought, with such a companion, would take the sun across with him to that other side.

"You let your imagination run away with you, Joan," he said, softly, slipping unconsciously into her Christian name. "Life is simple enough if you only look it squarely in the face."

There was a pause; the girl poured herself out another cup of tea and sat stirring it thoughtfully; the man put his down untasted on the table, as if tea drinking were an occupation too unromantic for the occasion. With a sudden impulse he got up, and, crossing to her side, leant kindly over her.

"And so you don't want to marry me, Joan?" he said, almost reproachfully.

The girl started, coloured deeply, and drew back from him.

"No! No!" she said. "Even if you loved me ever so much, I would not marry you. It would be terrible—terrible to think that you would grow gradually indifferent to me, and to know that having taken the step there was no drawing back; and yet—" she paused painfully—"I am miserable, I love you so. I want you near me always—I want you always."

She broke down with something like a sob and buried her face in her hands. The man looked at her helplessly for a moment, and then, kneeling at her side, drew her hands gently down.

"Joan," he said, "you dear, romantic little soul, look at me."

Joan obeyed with swimming eyes.

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"Now put these sentimental ideas on one side. You and I, Joan, are going to be a practical couple. We are not going to expect such a great deal of the other side of the river you spoke of, and then we shall not be disappointed. Joan, you must marry me."

The girl drew herself away from his arms, and shook her head vehemently.

"Don't ask me, pray—pray don't ask me!" she cried. "You don't love me, you know you don't; and even if you cared for me as earnestly as I care for you, it would only be worse still. I should only have the more to lose. No," she turned and faced him eagerly, "you must cure me—disillusion me. Let me see that it is only an infatuation—that you are only an ordinary man, after all."

"I could easily do that," said the young man, soberly; "but I doubt whether you would listen. Love, little girl, always idealises. You look at me through rosy-coloured spectacles and magnify my virtues and overlook my faults. Whatever I do now, and whatever I have done in the past, would be excused in your eyes."

"No! no!" said the girl. "Indeed, I will listen. Dear Hugh, I want to be disillusioned."

But the young man only shook his head.

"Even if you listened you would not believe," he said gently. "Now listen, Joan. I am going to suggest a remedy, a seldom failing remedy, and that is time. I am going away from you for six months. At the end of that time, dear, you will laugh at yourself, at your folly, or my name is not Hugh Dornay. Shall we do as I say?"

"For six long months!" echoed the girl, with a paling face. "It's a terrible remedy; but, yes, I will try it."

* * * * *

"Joan!"

"Hugh!"

They had met again, not in her little drawing-room as before, but in the country lanes, where the light summer breeze frolicked with the hay and carried it away, mingling it with the scent of the honeysuckle. The six months had barely gone, and there they were again, face to face.

The girl hung her head, and the colour rushed into her face as the young man sprang forward and caught her hand in his with every expression of delight.

"Well, Joan," he said in a voice which trembled with a strange emotion, "and are you disillusioned?"

He waited anxiously for the reply which never came, and, bending down, read the answer in her eyes.

"No, dear Joan? Well, I am glad, for I have just thought of another remedy which we must try together. Joan, I have caught your complaint—I want to be disillusioned, too."

The girl looked up with the pent-up love of six months in her eyes.

"How?" she whispered softly.

"I thought we would cross that bridge of illusion together, hand in hand," he said. "Whatever disappointments there may be in store for us we will share. Joan, my dear little Joan, I love you. Will you? It is the only way."

The girl raised her face trustfully, yet a little wistfully, to his.

"Yes," she echoed, quickly; "it is the only way."

D. C. L.

IF YOU'VE FAILED

in business, it's perhaps because you have taken up the wrong work. You should ascertain from an unbiassed person the real bent of your mind, and to do this you should send a specimen of your handwriting to *RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.*, inclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

JOHN'S BURGLAR HUNT.

"John, hark!"

Mrs. McMillinger sat straight up in her bed, and listened to a noise she seemed to hear downstairs.

"What is it, Maria?" inquired Mr. McMillinger drowsily.

"It seemed like somebody talking. Listen!"

Mr. McMillinger listened. He, too, thought he heard something.

"I will see what it is," speaking very loudly and moving very leisurely. "Don't be alarmed, Maria. We are well armed; besides these two revolvers," he continued, in a high-pitched voice intended to terrify any unauthorised persons that might be in the house, "I have a heavy stick and a large paper-weight. Be calm, Maria."

He crawled out of bed, collected his arsenal, and the procession moved downstairs in the following order: Mr. McMillinger, with a revolver in each hand, heavy stick under one arm, and a paper weight under the other. Mrs. McMillinger ready to scream, with front hair in curl papers, and the lamp in her hand.

At the landing half-way down, Mr. McMillinger stopped.

"Maria," he observed sternly, "it is necessary for you to go in front. You have the lamp. I'll protect you."

Mrs. McMillinger took her place in front as directed, and the procession moved on again. At the foot of the stairs John stopped and took up a commanding position near the hall rack.

"Now, Maria, go ahead with the lamp into this room on the left. I will remain here to see if anybody rushes out. If anybody does rush out," he exclaimed, grinding his teeth in a manner horrible to hear, "I will put fourteen bullets through him, knock him down with this paper-weight, and break every bone in his body with this stick!"

Mrs. McMillinger went into the room on the left and looked round.

"Do you see anything, Maria?" asked her husband in a voice of thunder.

"No, John."

"Go through the other rooms," he roared, bracing himself firmly against the wall.

While John remained in the hall armed to the teeth, pale with iron resolution, and trembling with ferocity, Maria explored the rooms and came back.

"Did you see anything?" he demanded.

"Not a thing, John."

"Give me the lamp."

He handed his weapons to Maria, took the lamp, and with dauntless bravery went through the rooms himself.

"It wasn't anything, Maria," he said with extreme disgust. "You didn't hear anything or anybody."

The procession moved up the stairway on the return trip.

"You must try to overcome this timidity of yours, Maria," said Mr. McMillinger, as he put down the lamp and relieved his wife of the load of deadly weapons. "If I hadn't been here to protect you," he grumbled, crawling back into bed, "you would have frightened yourself to death." P. O. W.

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The Tragedy at Ivydene.

Told in Three Acts.

During their tenancy of the villa in Rutland Road they were known to the other residents of the street as the Ivydenes, from the name of the villa itself, which was painted on the porch over the door. When they are referred to now they are described as "the young people," in order to distinguish them from the present occupants.

Rutland Road is a small thoroughfare, comprising just forty-eight houses, twenty-four on each side, each exactly resembling its neighbour, after the manner of the modern villa residences.

The houses had not been built long enough at that time for the Venetian blinds to have been worn out, and this naturally intensified the resemblance, and so much alike were these villas that the tenants discovered that one key would fit all the doors in the road, while the keys attached to the doors of the inner rooms were equally interchangeable.

The villas were small, but the rent was not in proportion, and the neighbourhood was regarded as select, almost aristocratic, and these two factors effectually prevented the road from being invaded by working men and their families. There was an air of dignity about the thoroughfare which impressed you; it was easy to understand that appearances went for a good deal in Rutland Road, and that the residents endeavoured to maintain appearances.

Being so eminently respectable, the residents did not gossip; had it been otherwise, they would have known more about the life story of the young people at Ivydene. Of course, it might happen that Mrs. Lindisfarne met Mrs. Retreat—people were familiarly known by the names of their villas—at a social function in the district, but it was remarkable that there was scarcely any neighbouring, to use a homely phrase.

This explains why the Ivydenes were not on visiting terms with any other resident of Rutland Avenue—that is, Rutland Road, the slip may be pardoned, seeing that the oldest resident was always agitating in the local newspaper that the existing name was intolerable, and that "Road" should be replaced by "Avenue."

Ivydene had been to let for nearly three months, which was surprising, for the villas let as a rule very quickly, and those residents who had invested their money in the purchase of one of the forty-eight began to wonder if the road were about to undergo a reverse of fortune, and the houses to fall in value.

This feeling was strong in Rosendale, which was exactly opposite Ivydene; it is vexatious to be continually confronted by an empty house, it is far worse than being next door to one, as in the latter case you do not see quite so much of it. It was consequently with a sentiment of relief and thankfulness that Mrs. Rosendale, peeping out from the side of the curtain, saw the landlord's agent take away the obnoxious board "To Let." Others had noticed the removal, and curiosity—dignified, stand-offish curiosity—was aroused concerning the new tenants.

"Newly married, and not up to very much!" was the pronouncement of Mrs. Retreat, as an uncovered van, containing furniture, passed her window. The Retreat was the first house at the principal end of Rutland Road, so she enjoyed the privilege of being the first to know anything that happened to the road from outside, as it were. The house opposite was occupied by a widower with a housekeeper, but the latter could not share the privilege, as housekeepers didn't count.

Three minutes afterwards Mrs. Rosendale made the very same mental observation. The furniture, of which there was not much, was painfully new and frail; bent wood and bamboo furniture prevailed, the kitchen table was plain deal, cheap and not over solid, and the pictures—judging by the glimpse which Mrs. Rosendale caught of one, were also cheap. The goods were taken over by the agent, who had apparently been commissioned to get things ship-shape for the newcomers.

During the next four days the curtains in the two adjoining villas and the six opposite ones were agitated every time the sound of wheels was heard, and finally the patience of the watchers was rewarded. A cab drove up to Ivydene and a young man alighted; then, after some waiting and arranging of a dress, a young woman also alighted, availing herself of the proffered hand. Luckily, it was a hansom, or there would have been great disappointment at Rosendale, and the lady of the house would have envied the occupants of the villas adjoining Ivydene to a greater extent than usual.

There was a bright, happy look in the face of the young husband; his clothes were new, his linen dazzlingly white. A really good, loving husband, in the opinion of the several ladies who had their eyes fixed on him.

The wife's face was calm and stately; it lacked the warmth of the young man's. Her dress and general appearance betokened the well-to-do class, and belied the cheapness of the furniture. She cast a glance up and down the street as the cab rattled away, and passed through the gate, up the narrow path to the front door which her husband had just opened. The door closed on them and on the first scene of a tragedy.

The following morning, at a quarter past eight, the door of Ivydene was opened and the husband sallied forth on his way "to business," without doubt. His wife, robed in an elegant dressing-gown, followed him down the path to the gate, where an affectionate farewell took place. She watched him till he reached the end of the road, where he turned and waved a final adieu. Her face was animated this morning, and her appearance created a more favourable impression in the minds of the neighbours.

About six o'clock in the evening she left the villa, dressed elegantly and fashionably, and walked in the direction of the station; a few minutes later they returned together, he carrying a bunch of flowers which he had purchased for her in the city. Quite a model couple! So said Rutland Road.

Sometimes she would be dressed in the morning, and would go with him to the railway station, but as a rule she bade him adieu in her dressing-gown at the gate. In the evening, too,

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she discontinued her walks to meet him after a time, and waited for him at the gate, always smartly dressed. They saw him come home evening after evening with a smiling face and a bunch of flowers or a novel.

The months went past, and Mrs. Rosendale fancied that the step of the young husband was not so elastic as formerly; his clothes were not so spruce—always carefully brushed and neat, but just a trifle worn, they seemed. Mrs. Lindisfarne declared to her husband that the coat was shiny in certain parts when he was walking in the sun. The wife did not come to the door either to say good-bye, or to welcome him.

A whisper went all through Rutland Road one morning, and the residents watched for the baby to be seen at the window. That time came at length, and mother and little daughter came to the upper window to wave good-bye to daddy.

The baby grew apace; the father's weary look vanished, although his clothes became still less spruce. It was wonderful to see how his face lighted up as he turned the corner and strained his eyes to catch a glimpse of the baby face at the window. It was Mrs. Retreat who noticed this fact; she was able to see him for a few yards before he turned into Rutland Road, and she was astonished at the difference in his demeanour in the course of a few yards.

He still brought something home, but not the bunch of flowers. It was a few leaves of ivy, or a piece of a creeper, now and then a sprig of geranium. It was suggestive of a difference in point of money, but of undiminished affection. If he could not afford to buy, he could and would pluck from the hedges as he passed and take home something to show her that the will was there if the means were lacking. And, sometimes, he carried a toy.

But the wife seldom watched for him at this period; the old custom had fallen into disuse. The little girl waited in the bay window, and clapped her hands with glee when she saw him, running to the door as fast as she could toddle, and standing in the hall till he entered. How like her mother she was growing! No wonder he loved the child, thought Mrs. Rosendale; he had a double reason for it—it was his child and she was so like the mother whom he idolised!

It was summer again, and they saw him in the little front garden after his return in the evening, playing with the little one till her bedtime arrived. The mother went out as soon as he reached home—went out in smart dresses and smarter hats, constantly changed, to seek some relaxation, no doubt. She often went out during the daytime, too, leaving the child to play by itself, or asleep. Rutland Road wondered how she did it, wondered when she did her work, and how she managed to dress so well, while her husband's clothes grew more and more shabby. Mrs. Rosendale, who chanced to meet him one evening as he emerged from the railway station in the full glare of the sun, asserted most positively that his coat was actually green in places.

The little girl came with him to the door in the morning now. There was such a merry good-bye, and he seemed to bury his face in her curls. But in spite of this happiness, his step became slow and lagging, and his face was possessed by an indescribable expression of weariness. If he passed any of his neighbours whom he knew by sight, he would try to hide the frayed edges of his cuffs and collars. His linen was clean, but the signs of wear were very evident.

But there came a morning when he emerged from the hall alone and shut the door softly, so softly! The doctor came during the day, and the father returned home much earlier than usual. He almost ran along the street, so anxious was he to gain access to the house and to the room where——

Two days afterwards the blinds were drawn, and a little coffin was taken into the house. And the second part of the tragedy ended.

It would have been difficult for many of his former friends to have recognised the tenant of Ivydene after the funeral. His face was white and drawn, and his walk had lost all the springiness of yore. The black clothes were not worn long; he was soon going to work in the old garments, which were very dark. Poverty was stamped on him in large letters. The mother, on the contrary, still dressed well; she, also, was soon out of deep mourning and going out as before. There was still one other trace of the old time left—he brought home a little sprig of a flower or a leaf or two, to give to her. And as she left the offering on the table, he ceased to offer it to her personally, and placed it in a vase which was set in front of her seat at the table. Quite by accident Mrs. Rosendale heard that; a boy, cleaning windows at Ivydene one evening (the husband was ashamed of them, they were so dirty), had noticed it.

It was getting late in summer, it was almost autumn, when the neighbours saw a cart pull up at the door of Ivydene. They watched from behind the curtains, and they saw some furniture taken away.

"Selling some of the home!" murmured Mrs. Rosendale.

About five o'clock they saw Mrs. Ivydene come out, dressed for a journey, and carrying a small bag. She was as stately as ever. What did it mean?

He came home from the office at his usual time, and with the weary gait that had grown so familiar. How thin and ill he looked. It had never struck them so forcibly before, and they kept their eyes on the door after it had shut behind him, as though they fancied he must have gone through the woodwork instead of opening the door in the proper way. It was while they were thus engaged that they saw the door open violently and Ivydene spring down the two steps and dash to the gate. His hat was off, he clutched convulsively at a sheet of notepaper and glared in wild despair along the street. Whatever was the matter? It was growing dusk, and Mrs. Rosendale was terrified.

He raised the sheet of paper and scanned it. Then he raised his hands aloft, still clutching the paper in one, in a mute appeal to the Power above, stumbled back to the steps, and sank on the lower one. He buried his face in his hands, and remained still except for an occasional slight tremor which agitated his frame.

Mrs. Rosendale was genuinely alarmed. It was dusk, and night was falling so rapidly that she could not see exactly what was happening. She waited in nervous anxiety for her own partner to return for the day, so that she might enlist his aid for the purpose of lending succour over the way if needed. But Mr. Rosendale was tired, and declared that he could not go trotting about after other people's troubles.

It was past ten o'clock when Mrs. Rosendale prevailed on her lord and master to go over the way and see if anything had happened to Mr. Ivydene. He growled that *he* had not seen anyone on the step of that villa as he came down the road, but he supposed he wouldn't get any peace if he didn't go. So he went, with a taper, and some wax vestas to procure a light if required.

Yes, he could dimly see a figure on the doorstep! He struck a vesta and lighted the taper. A sheet of paper lay at his feet and he involuntarily picked it up and read what was written thereon. Only a few words, a few cruel, death-dealing words to a loving heart! "Don't try to find out where I've gone. I'm sick to death of this poverty and wish I had never married you. I want something better, and I'll have it."

Mr. Rosendale's face paled. He dropped the paper, and raised the head of the huddled figure so that the light of the flickering taper fell on it. It was pale and tearstained—and cold!

And thus, on that balmy evening of late summer, the curtain fell on the last scene of the tragedy of love that had not its reward!

George Day.

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Mr. Bowser, Hypnotist.

It Wasn't His Fault that His Experiments Were Not a Success.

When dinner had been finished the other evening, Mrs. Bowser noticed that Mr. Bowser was looking at her in a strange manner, and when he had continued this for several minutes she asked:

"Have you got a headache or a sore throat this evening?"

"No," he answered.

"Is there something you're trying to puzzle out?"

"No."

"Well, your countenance looks as blank as if you'd fallen from a haystack and struck on your head. I thought something must have happened."

"You needn't worry yourself about my blank countenance, Mrs. Bowser. As a matter of fact, you are not competent to tell when a man's whole soul is in his face or when he has no more feeling than a cabbage head."

It was policy for her to maintain silence, and he walked up and down for five minutes with his hands crossed under his coat-tails before he continued:

"A rather queer thing happened at the office this afternoon. A man named Gilbert came in on some business, and the minute I caught his eye I hypnotised him. He was like one in a trance. When I told him to sit down, stand up or walk about, he obeyed me like a child. He would have flung himself out of the window if I had told him to. It's the first time I ever knew that I had hypnotic powers, and the idea rather upsets me. Did you ever suspect that I had this power?"

"Never," replied Mrs. Bowser, with a laugh.

"What ever are you giggling about?" he demanded as his ears began to twitch.

"About your hypnotic powers. Did you take this Mr. Gilbert out after the performance and treat him?"

"Of course not! What do you mean?"

"I thought it quite likely that he was working you for drinks."

"My good woman, you ought to be sent to an asylum for fools!" shouted Mr. Bowser as the blood reddened his face and neck and took away all the blankness. "If I ever start to tell you anything, you always twist it about to make out that I haven't brains enough to smoke a pipe. Did you ever see a case of hypnotism?"

"I don't think so."

"Then don't try to be too funny. I say I hypnotised that man. More than that, I have discovered that I have a great power that way. I can hypnotise you, the cat, the cook, almost anyone else. Just watch that cat for a minute."

He sat down with his hands on his knees and fastened his eyes on those of the cat, which was sitting on the floor a few feet away. She glared back at him for a few seconds, and then her eyes began to grow green, her tail to become bushy and her back to arch.

"She'll go mad if you don't stop," cautioned Mrs. Bowser.

"Keep quiet. Don't break the spell," whispered Mr. Bowser as he continued his glare. "She came under the influence sooner than I expected, and it will be a complete success. By George, look at that back! Now watch her while I tell her to jump down and roll over on the floor."

He gave the order but the cat meowed and spat at him. He repeated it, and she uttered a long drawn yeowl.

"You are driving her mad!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowser as she rose up to flee.

"Shut up! Now, cat, you jump to the floor and roll over. Jump, I say!"

She jumped. She jumped to the piano, clawed off the cover, bounded to the floor and after a "spit" and a howl she ran down the basement stairs and scared the cook out of her seven senses as she whisked out into the back yard.

"Didn't I tell you I could do it?" exclaimed Mr. Bowser in great glee as he rose up. "That cat will be a beautiful subject to work on, and in less than a week I'll have her standing on her head and doing all kinds of tricks. I will now exercise my powers on you."

"You won't do anything of the kind!" protested Mrs. Bowser, "and you'd also better let the cat alone. She was scared instead of hypnotised."

"Nothing of the sort. She was under the influence as plain as day. Look me in the eye for a minute."

"I shan't do it."

"Look me in the eye. Now raise your right arm."

Mrs. Bowser turned her back on him.

"Now lift your left foot."

No lifting took place, but Mrs. Bowser started down the hall to go upstairs.

"Woman, I command you to return!" shouted Mr. Bowser, but she did not feel the "influence" and passed on out of his sight.

"I'll bring her to it! I'll bring her to it!" he muttered to himself as he turned away. "I've got the power and she feels it, but I'll take her unawares next time. I'll go down and hypnotise the cook."

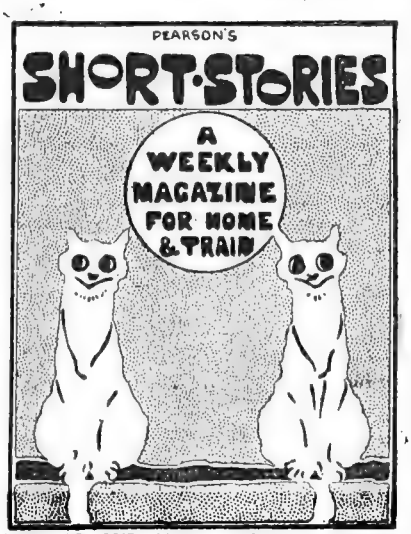
The cook promptly objected. He had scarcely explained his errand and asked her to fix her eyes on his for a minute when she said:

"I'll do nothing of the sort, and if you don't get out of this kitchen I'll throw up my job."

"But, my dear woman, I wish to carry out an experiment," he pleaded.

"Then carry it out on somebody else. I'm here to do the cooking at twenty pounds a year, and nobody can make a fool of me. I had a brother who was fool enough to look a man in the eye, and he went to the hospital with his legs all tied up in knots."

Mr. Bowser turned away with a sigh, but luck was with him. Just at that moment the basement bell rang, and he went to



THIS IS OUR NEXT WEEK'S COVER.

the door to find a travelling tinker who wanted to mend old tinware.

"Come in," was the hearty greeting. "I don't think we have anything to mend, but I'd like to explain a matter to you. You have heard of hypnotism, of course?"

"It's where a feller glares at you?" replied the tinker

"Yes, something that way."

"And you lose your mind and he makes you do as he will?"

"That's it. I think I'm a hypnotist, and I want to experiment a little. You look to me like a good subject, and——"

"No fooling, sir! I'm a hardworking man, and I don't stand no nonsense."

"Look me in the eye," whispered Mr. Bowser.

"I'll do it, sir, but——"

"Now let yourself seem to sink away as if going to sleep. Keep your eyes on mine."

"Don't get me roused, sir, because when I'm roused I'm dangerous."

"Keep quiet, tinker. Now, then, you are in a burning building and must escape by the window. Do you see the flames around you?"

"I do."

"Do you feel the heat?"

"I do."

"Do you realise your peril?"

"I do, sir, and I'll be jiggered if I'll let any man make a Punch and Judy out of me! Here's for you!"

It was the cook's yells that brought Mrs. Bowser down stairs, and she found Mr. Bowser on his back on the dining room floor in a semi-unconscious condition. The tinker had given him one on the jaw and got out.

"It was the hypnotism, the hypnotism, missus!" explained the cook as she stood with arms uplifted.

"Yes, it was the hypnotism," whispered Mrs. Bowser as she bent over the recumbent form. "He's got it, and got it bad and while I'm making a poultice for his jaw you get the camphor and take off his shoes and collar."

"And will he live, mum?"

"Oh, yes, but he won't be a hypnotist any more. He'll probably turn to phrenology."

M. Quad.

A Diplomatist.

HE: "The artists say that five feet four inches is the divine height for a woman." His darling (crossly): "You know I am five feet eight." He (quickly): "You are more than divine, dear."

She Knew.

OLD FLINK: "I doubt if one man out of twenty can recall to memory the language he used in proposing." Young Stewpid: "Probably not. But the girl can. Mine did. When the breach of promise suit came up she was able to repeat my proposal word for word."

From Information Received.

"WHY do you always question patients so closely about what they eat? Does the information you get help you to diagnose their cases?" Doctor: "Oh, no! But by doing so I am enabled to guess what their station in life is, and how much in fees I can probably get out of them."

The Grocer Beat Him.

JOHNNY'S grandpa was explaining to Johnny about a conjurer he had seen, and about the wonderful tricks he did, and finished up by telling him of the hat-trick—how this man could bring oranges, eggs, and fancy boxes, all out of an empty hat. Johnny wondered, but then said quickly: "Grandpa, that is nothing to what the grocer up our street can do." "Why, Johnny, what can he do?" "Oh, he can give you the 1s. 10d. and 1s. 6d. butter all out of the same tub!"

NAME HUNTING COMPETITION.

British and Irish Rivers.

FIRST PRIZE - £10. SECOND PRIZE - £2.
THIRD to SIXTH PRIZES - £1 each.

Below will be found fifteen sets of words, each set describing the name of a river in the United Kingdom.

Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those rivers you can discover. If you can't find all, put down as many as you can.

NOTE THESE FACTS.

1. Names must be written in ink.
2. Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
3. When you have filled up your list, cut it out and keep it by you until we tell you to send it in.
4. You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
5. In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.
6. No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and those selected as winners may be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition.

The first prize of £10 will be given to the reader from whom we receive coupons containing the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

SECOND LIST. Cut to edge—>

Example:

To flow gently..... Ouse.

16. **A large quadruped with two humps on its back** ..... 16 .....
17. **Commit to memory a passage** ..... 17 .....
18. **To put on** ..... 18 .....
19. **A piece of timber used as a support** ..... 19 .....
20. **A standard** ..... 20 .....
21. **To baffle** ..... 21 .....
22. **A sieve** ..... 22 .....
23. **Spars of a ladder, grind!** ..... 23 .....
24. **Cleanse a stream** ..... 24 .....
25. **The dark ocean** ..... 25 .....
26. **Natural instruments of mastication** ..... 26 .....
27. **An itinerant seller** ..... 27 .....
28. **The quarter towards which the wind blows** ..... 28 .....
29. **A female sheep** ..... 29 .....
30. **The outer covering of anything** ... 30 .....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Cut to edge—>

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The Major's Wife.

What a Girl's Love of Adventure Did.

On the platform of a railway station, in Dresden, a varied crowd was moving to and fro as the time approached for the departure of the Leipsic train. Passengers were constantly arriving and hastily pushing their way towards the entrance, when two ladies alighted from a carriage, and passing through the waiting-room, walked slowly up to the train.

One was tall and slender, with an attractive face, which in a crowd, however, might be passed by, whereas her friend's dainty figure would command a second glance everywhere.

Her sparkling brown eyes lighted up a piquant face of pale brunette type, while her fresh, red lips revealed two rows of splendid teeth. Rich black hair curled softly round a perfect brow, her travelling hat only partly concealing her heavy braids.

"I must confess, Helen," said the taller lady, turning to her companion, "I do not envy you your trip to-day; in this heat, and in a crowded ladies' compartment, you will suffer torments and think with longing of our shady garden and cool verandah."

"Everything in its time, Emma," was Helen's quick rejoinder. "Sitting in the shade for a long time makes one eager to travel in the heat for a change—I am sure I shall arrive safe and sound at Leipsic."

"That point of view many others seem to share, as the station swarms with people, but I still maintain that only your brain could conceive so crazy an idea; you, especially, are fond of such eccentric enterprises."

"Emma, Emma, yours is a case of the fox and the grapes. If you could go with me all would be well; my idea is not crazy at all, but very original. Won't it be splendid to arrive so unexpectedly at Hansen's? Fancy my sudden appearance at the garden festival as a gipsy, mystifying and tricking everyone. No one will be able to imagine who it is, telling such truths, disclosing the past and boldly prophesying the future. Before people discover it is I, I shall have disappeared and returned to you. I always dearly wished to have an adventure."

"Well, you little enthusiast," laughed Emma, "you will have plenty of adventures at this festival. Hearts you may conquer, too, as your southern complexion and bright eyes in a gipsy costume will be most effective.

"I really believe the train is just going to start. Come, we must look for a compartment." Quickly passing along the train the two friends searched for a seat, and then stopped for a moment before the crowded ladies' compartment.

"There's no room here," said Helen. "Let's try to find a non-smoking compartment."

"The next one is full," answered Emma, "but further in front I saw an empty one. See, a gentleman is entering it."

Helen hastened to the open door, then turned quickly and whispered to her friend:

"But, Emma, there is only one gentleman in this compartment. I can't travel alone with him."

"Oh, this is your love of adventure," mocked Emma; "as soon as one appears in the distance you take to your heels. But, indeed," she continued, after a pause, "the gentleman looks quite respectable and trustworthy. I think you may safely risk it."

"It is easy for you to make fun of me, but just because I am undertaking this trip all alone, I don't wish to do anything imprudent."

"Wait," cried Emma triumphantly, "step in and trust to me. I have an idea that will protect and amuse you. Quick, there is no time to be lost."

"Take your seats, please!" cried the guards. The doors were shut, and the last farewells spoken through the windows. Helen leant out, waiting to hear the good idea her friend had promised her. She had not noticed that the gentleman, after courteously bowing to her, had risen and was looking over her shoulder along the platform. Emma, however, saw him, and called to her friend with a merry laugh: "Good-bye, dear Helen; remember me to your husband, the stern major, and ask him to send you to us soon again!"

A shrill whistle, and the train slowly started. Helen with difficulty suppressed the laugh caused by her friend's last words, and took her seat. How could Emma ever think of such a thing! But it certainly was delightful, and, moreover, very prudent, as this new and unexpected dignity altered her position entirely.

When they were out of the station Helen rose to open the window, which, however, would not yield to her efforts.

"Allow me, madam," said a deep, pleasant voice. Indeed the stranger had addressed her as "madam." So the ruse had been successful. One moment Helen hesitated, then she turned, grave and dignified, as would become a major's wife. Yet the pleasure at the novelty of the situation shone in her eyes when she spoke:

"If you will be so good; it is suffocating in here."

The stranger, a tall, athletic man, with fine brow and deep eyes, gave an impression of unusual intelligence. He certainly was a person of distinction and position.

The open window and the words of thanks led to a conversation which soon became animated and aroused Helen's keenest interest. She had complained of the tropical heat; as consolation the stranger gave her a description of the discomforts of an African noon, with its unbearable glare, an Indian midsummer, that would be fatal to a European unless he took refuge in the cool woods of the Himalaya mountains. Everything this man said sounded so real, as though he told of his own experiences.

Helen listened enchanted, losing no opportunity of urging him on by intelligent questions. He pictured for her the cities of the East—Delhi and Singapore, the cosmopolitan Shanghai and the imperial Peking, the yellow swamps of the plains, the mountain chains of China, with their unpronounceable names, and at last, he spoke of the magic beauty of dawn on the Indian Ocean.

"Have you seen all that yourself?" asked Helen eagerly.

"I spent several years in India."

"For pleasure?" She regretted at once her indiscreet question, but she did so want to know who he was. He certainly did not look like a merchant.

"Not altogether," he replied, laughing. "Many things one has to endure cannot be called pleasure. And, on the other hand, the astounding wealth of experience gained far exceeds the word pleasure. I was there to make geological researches," he added, as her questioning glance still rested on him.

So he was a scholar. Helen found this most interesting, as she had often wished to meet a famous professor. He did not seem old and dignified enough for that. And with what a strange expression his eyes rested upon her small person—they were beautiful, deep eyes—his voice had a sonorous ring that thrilled the musical sense of Helen.

"What an advantage men have in this world!" said the young girl, as she looked out upon the passing landscape. "They can travel and make everything real in life their own, while we dabble a little in art and so-called accomplishments."

"Oh, do not find fault with a woman's lot," he replied eagerly. "No one knows better than a scientist how one-sided our culture is. Believe me, I have often felt a real longing for the subjects we must neglect and which impress me as the special sphere of gifted, high-minded women. Only yesterday, in our magnificent gallery, I felt like a poor stranger among those marvels of art."

Now Helen was in her element. Art, music, literature—everything that filled and inspired her young mind, was touched upon in the following hours. She was charming in her bright, unconscious mood, and her companion became more and more engrossed in contemplation of her large, beaming eyes.

Suddenly he remembered that his travelling companion was the wife of another. He was silent for a while. Thoughtfully he passed his hand over his brow and said:

"After our interesting conversation you will certainly pardon the wish that we should not part as strangers. Allow me to introduce myself to you—Professor Roditz, of Halle."

"Professor Roditz?" cried Helen, joyfully; in her excitement she seized his hand with a hearty grasp.

"Oh, how happy this makes me! How often I have wished to meet you! I have read with great enthusiasm your letters of travel."

The Professor bowed, smiling. "You touch a weak point in an author. It is pleasant, when one is away, to be understood and appreciated at home; I presume you read my letters with your husband?"

Helen did not notice the slight note of pain in this unexpected question. She had forgotten her friend's parting remarks. After all, though, she would probably never see him again, so she must think of some comical name, as that of her supposed husband. She would much rather have shaken hands with her companion and said: "My name is Helen Elden, and I hope to see you again."

These thoughts and considerations crossed each other in Helen's brain, while the Professor, after having presented himself, mused and wondered too.

The short "Yes" of the Major's wife, the sudden embarrassed silence that followed it, perplexed him. What might be the cause of it, and why was the wedding ring missing on her hand? Why did she not tell him her name?

He knew he ought not to inquire further, as she seemed intentionally to withhold it, and, indeed, it mattered little to him whether he knew the name of one whom he, in all probability, would never see again. Whence that intense regret he felt at this thought? It seemed impossible to separate from her forever; he must again see those wonderful brown eyes,

Helen listened enchanted, losing no opportunity of urging him on by intelligent questions.

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this dainty figure; he must once—only once—kiss that small hand that was now smoothing back the dark curls.

But he quickly subdued such wishes as contrary to his strict sense of honour. He could not help, however, giving a few moments of thought to the happiness he would feel in calling such a woman his own. What a change such a fairy would make in his study. He felt oppressed—he rose and glanced out of the window—then he turned again to Helen, who, absorbed in her own thoughts and fearing the possible questions of the professor, had not noticed the interruption of the conversation.

Roditz resolutely commenced. "Your destination is Leipsic, madam? I shall not stop there but go through to Halle, and before long shall undertake a long journey. When on sea or in the Asiatic mountains I shall think of my native land. You, too, will be in my memory, and the happy moments spent with you. So I should like to know to whom my thoughts turn—will you pardon me if I beg of you your name?"

"Helen," the young girl whispered softly; he scarcely heard her.

"Helen," he repeated. "The name is very dear to me. It was my mother's."

Her sympathy was aroused.

"And your mother shares your home?"

"No, she is dead. I am alone in the world, and probably for ever," replied the Professor gravely. "A man when very young, has his dreams of a bright future, of a home full of love and sunshine; but such dreams do not always come true," he added, with peculiar emphasis.

Helen was silent—she began to suspect the meaning of his words. A feeling of pain shot through her heart. Would that she had never entered into this deception; that this idea never had occurred to Emma.

The Professor saw her confusion, and used the opportunity for further questioning.

"You gave me your Christian name, so dear to me, but your husband's name I should like to know, too; even should I never see you again, it would be a pleasure to me to watch your life from afar."

Helen shivered. At last the dreaded moment had come. Should she, indeed, tell the falsehood, deceive the confidence of this man? And yet—she could not make up her mind to the difficult confession; she must cling to her *rôle* and pronounce the name she had thought of. What mattered it? Something like defiance stirred within her. She would never see the Professor again. What difference would it make under what family name he thought of her?

She whispered "Fritters." The Professor bowed courteously. "I thank you, madam. And have you lived long in Leipsic? Have you much social life there?"

"Thank Heaven!" breathed Helen. This question at least could be answered generally.

"No, we moved there quite lately, and we rarely go into society," she replied, thinking of her home, her parents, and her younger brothers and sisters. "We have, however, a very pleasant circle of congenial friends; we read, have music, amateur theatricals and dances, spending many happy hours together. My domestic duties fill up the rest of my time most pleasantly"—and again she only thought of her sisters and brothers, how attached they were to her, how she worked and played with them, thought and cared for them.

"I can well imagine you busy in your home," remarked the Professor, "giving and receiving happiness, brightening everything with your harmonious personality and cultured mind. You certainly have children?"

"Children!" Helen was aghast, and looked at him with terrified eyes; this question she had thought impossible. "Children!" Oh, this dreadful question—but it served her right. Why had she played such a part?

Now she had a real adventure, as she had so often wished for. But such an one. Children, she and children.

"Yes, no—that is—— Oh, Heaven," stammered she, and covering her face with her hands burst into tears.

The Professor was visibly disturbed.

"I regret deeply to have touched a painful subject, madam; do forgive me."

Quickly Helen uncovered her face, and, suppressing her tears, looked up. A painful subject. What did the Professor mean? It was maddening. How should she disentangle herself?

"Professor," she began hesitatingly—a sudden crash, a jerk—the carriage rocked—Helen felt faint, and lost consciousness.

* * * * * *

On the promenade in Leipsic stands a handsome house, through the open windows of which the perfume of the syringa blossoms was wafted on that morning.

In a simply furnished room on the first floor lay the occupant, comfortably stretched in a lounge chair before the open window, looking up into the green foliage of the trees, while the aroma of his cigar mingled with the perfume of the blossoms without.

He was a man of fine physique, between thirty and forty, with a fresh, good-natured face. He enjoyed the fine morning, and was evidently in the best humour.

Suddenly the door was thrown open, and a clumsy figure stumbled in. "Major, Major, another telegram."

It was Christian, the Major's faithful servant, the sworn friend of all the children and dogs of the entire neighbourhood.

The Major looked at the disturbed face of his servant, and said, laughingly: "You are always the same ass, Christian. One would think it would burn your fingers. Give it to me."

Christian stared. "Oh," he said, "if only the telegram does not bring bad news—last night I dreamt of my dead mother, and you——" He stopped bewildered at the expression on his master's face, who had in the meantime opened the envelope.

The Major stood, paper in hand, straight as an arrow, gazing into space as though he saw a ghost.

"The dickens!" he cried; "this is the most confounded nonsense I ever heard of. Here is again my 'wife.' It is enough to drive any one wild! Christian, come here. Look at me and tell me. Am I married?"

The Major's eyes sparkled so fiercely that it took Christian some time to recover himself.

"I can't say, Major," stammered the man.

"You can't say, you blockhead?" thundered the Major, pacing up and down the room. Suddenly he stopped and again took up the telegram. "It may be a mistake after all. But no, there is my name in plain letters: 'Major Fritters.' I am the only man of that name in the city. It is a malicious mystification, an infamous trick. But I shall find the miscreants. I shall——" And again he began to rage furiously up and down the room.

In the midst of this pandemonium the door opened and an officer entered, who, after a few seconds of most profound astonishment, threw himself into the nearest chair and burst into such uncontrollable laughter that the Major stopped, frowning heavily. "Will you soon have finished your confounded laughter?" he asked angrily. "I am not in the mood for joking. That I will tell you at once."

"But allow me," replied Captain Richter, recovering himself. "This is more than I can understand. I come here by appointment to ride with you, and find you raging up and down the room like a tiger. As soon as you become conscious of my presence, you abuse me to an extent that would call for a challenge were we not such good friends."

"I believe you are right," sighed the Major. "You must forgive me; but if one has to endure what I have to-day, even the gentlest soul would go beside himself. Here, read this rot." He passed him the telegrams. "This one first. Read it aloud that I can hear it again, and then tell me whether I am crazy, or what else it means."

He threw himself with resignation into a chair. Captain Richter unfolded the first telegram and read it with a voice that expressed unlimited astonishment. "Major Fritters, Leipsic. Railway accident. Your wife hurt. Come at

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once. Professor Roditz." Captain Richter let the paper fall.

"Well, I suppose you wired back there must be a mistake somewhere."

"Of course. I wired 'Notice of accident sent to my address by mistake.' Thereupon I received this second message." He handed the Captain the second telegram, which read: "Mistake impossible; Mrs. Fritters herself gave your address."

"This is most extraordinary," exclaimed the Captain.

"You see," said the Major, "you feel exactly as I did. It is maddening. Who pretends to be my wife? Who is Professor Roditz? I don't know him; I have a faint recollection of having seen his name in the newspapers. What in all the world has given that man the impression that I am married? How does he happen, with such obstinacy, to demand that I shall hasten to the wounded woman supposed to be my wife?"

"It is certainly the craziest idea I ever heard."

"Yes; I can't understand it."

"I should simply wire this Professor: 'I am unmarried, and shall not come.'"

"At first I thought of doing that, but after thinking the matter over, concluded that it would not do. I must go. You see that a lady, hurt in a railway accident, has given my name and address—is perhaps dying—that a Professor Roditz thinks she is my wife in spite of my telegrams, stating it is a mistake. What is the meaning of this mystery? Who has the audacity to pretend to be my wife? This riddle I must solve at once, and on the spot."

"You are right," mused the Captain. "Perhaps you will find an unfortunate woman, who, forced by circumstances, has a reason for keeping her name secret. Perhaps she has known you in former years, and in the present calamity has no other resource."

"Probably, although rather far-fetched," said the Major, annoyed. "And the consequence to me naturally did not occur to her. I am an officer, unmarried, and am, without preliminaries, promoted to the position of a married man. Perhaps my name has been used for a compromising swindle. That would be an infamous farce that would have to be stopped at once. I have no choice. I must go, if I can only obtain the necessary furlough soon enough."

"When I came here," said Captain Richter, "I saw the Colonel go into the barracks. You can stop there, secure the necessary permission, and catch the train leaving in an hour. Good luck to you."

Ten minutes later he was gone.

* * * *

The railway accident, which had taken place near a small station, had not been very serious; no lives were lost, but several of the passengers had been slightly injured. The two doctors of the town were soon on the spot, and while the younger looked after those that had been taken to an inn near by, Dr. Velden ordered Helen moved to his own house, as she still lay unconscious and appeared to be seriously injured.

In an ante-chamber adjoining the room in which Helen lay, Professor Roditz paced up and down in great excitement. He did not heed his own bruises—he only saw Helen's white face, her lifeless form, as she lay in his arms after the catastrophe.

What would the next hour bring? Was Helen—he thought of her only as Helen—seriously hurt, or would she be saved, and for whom? For a brutal, hateful man, without doubt, who would torment her with his jealousy and cruel neglect, as in the present instance.

The Professor, lost in consideration of the most unpleasant possibilities and probabilities, did not hear the door open. Only when a hand touched his arm, he started.

"Ah! It is you, doctor? How is our patient?"

His face expressed such anxiety that the doctor pressed his hand reassuringly, saying:

"Courage, there is no danger; not even a serious injury. The swoon was evidently caused by the shock and the loss of blood. The young lady is conscious, but I did not allow her to speak. I have given her a sedative which will give her the rest she so much needs. A wet compress has been placed on the wound on her head, and I am convinced that your *protégée* will be able to continue her journey in the morning."

"Thank Heaven, and thank you, doctor, for these good tidings," cried Professor Roditz, and so overwhelming a joy brightened his face, that the doctor answered surprised.

"Ah, is that the case? The young lady is your *fiancée?* Well, well, I can congratulate you with all your heart. Your future wife is certainly charming."

She stretched out her hand repellently, and groaned: "Away, away, only take him away!"

"You are mistaken, doctor, there are no such relations existing between us. I met the lady for the first time today. She is married, and I have telegraphed to her husband, Major Fritters, in Leipsic, who may arrive here by the next train."

"Fritters. What a comical name," laughed the doctor. "But I must confess I did not think an old practitioner like me could make such a mistake. I would have sworn she was a young girl. I must go now to look after the other patients, but shall be back before the arrival of the Major."

The doctor took his hat, and left the house grumbling.

"No relations—astonishing. Perhaps we shall have a most interesting scene when the husband arrives. For that this young man is head over ears in love with this young woman, a blind man can see!"

Professor Roditz, to regain his composure, took a long walk. He returned just in time to usher an officer into the room—so the Major had arrived.

Now he must control himself and observe closely. Bowing coldly, he stepped up to the Major:

"I have the honour of seeing Major Fritters?"

On the other hand, the Major did not look with any more friendliness upon the man who had summoned him here. With an ironical smile he said lightly: "Quite right—and I suppose you are Professor Roditz, who telegraphed for me?"

"Yes, I took the liberty, as I could not think what the doctor's verdict would be. Thank Heaven, there is no danger; but I do not doubt, Major, you will be happy to have your wife in your own care after this accident."

Without deigning to answer, the Major calmly turned to the doctor, asking him without the slightest emotion:

"So there is no danger? She is not unconscious, or through the shock—mentally unbalanced?"

"No, Major," said the doctor, annoyed at the unfeeling question. "Your wife has a wound on her head which has bled freely, but is not in the least dangerous, and will heal quickly. She lies asleep in the adjoining room, but may waken any moment. Then nothing will prevent your seeing her, only I should advise you to avoid excitement or the mention of domestic affairs."

"Whether my appearance will excite the patient I cannot tell, but of domestic affairs she will certainly not hear through me."

"Well," replied Doctor Velden, hotly, "if one has children, such communications are quite possible; I know that by experience."

The Major remained a moment speechless with astonishment.

"Children," the doctor had said. Things were constantly growing more complicated. Could it be possible that the stranger had confirmed this? At present he must remain perfectly passive, eventually the truth must come to light; in the meantime he would see her—his wife!

"And are you perfectly sure"—the Major turned again to the gentlemen—"that the lady is indeed Mrs. Fritters? Did she herself give this name?"

"Certainly," replied the Professor, aggravated at the ironical tone of the Major, who could not suppress a smile; and bowing courteously, said: "I am satisfied now, since the lady introduced herself as Mrs. Fritters. But now I should like to see her," he added cheerfully.

"As you please;" the doctor's voice sounded brusque, as he led the way into the adjoining room.

Helen had just awakened, as the doctor stepped quickly into the room.

"Here, madam, I bring your husband, who has come in answer to our telegram."

Until now Helen had only seen Dr. Velden, who bent over her.

"My husband! Oh, Heaven!" she whispered trembling, while the doctor beckoned to the Major to step forward. At the same moment Helen uttered a terrified cry, beside herself with fear and shame. She stretched out her hands repellently, and groaned: "Away, away, only take him away!"

Perplexed, the Major withdrew, not without a glance of warm sympathy at the pale young face. Such a wife he would not object to. For further consideration he had no time, as he was roughly drawn into the other room and confronted by the flashing eyes of Professor Roditz, while the doctor remained with Helen, trying his utmost to pacify her.

"Dear lady, you must not excite yourself. Your husband can at once return home if his presence worries you; besides, I will watch over you."

His comforting words, however, failed to quiet Helen. Her excitement only grew. She sobbed as if her heart would break, so that the doctor at last gave up his efforts.

Suddenly the door opened, and with the cry: "Helen, my poor Helen," a young girl hastened to the couch, knelt down, and took Helen into her arms.

"Emma, dearest Emma, now everything will come right." With these words Helen put her arms round her friend's neck, as if she would never let her go again.

"Poor Helen. Who would have thought that this pleasure trip would have such a tragic end? My uncle, the chief of the police, notified me of the accident, knowing you were on this train. I left at once, and heard at the station that you had only swooned, and were here under the care of Doctor Velden. And now I find you in this excitement. What does it mean? Are you injured? Are you suffering pain?" She raised her eyes to the doctor. "I am Emma Wahren, Helen's dearest friend, and beg you to tell me the whole truth."

"That is very simple," replied the doctor. "Your friend's condition leaves nothing to be desired. Now that you, her friend, have arrived, this unaccountable agitation at the appearance of her husband will subside, I hope. We naturally summoned him at once."

Now it was Emma's turn to stand aghast. She believed she had not heard aright; in greatest surprise she said: "What do you say? The husband of my friend? And you say he has arrived!"

"Indeed he has," growled the doctor, finally losing his patience. "Do you find it unnatural that we notified the husband of his wife's accident; and that he should come on at once? Professor Roditz assumed the responsibility of telegraphing for Major Fritters to Leipsic, who immediately came, as we expected him to. Why should this astonish you?"

Without answering, Emma inquired: "How did you know this name? Did my friend give it?"

"No, the Professor," was the doctor's impatient reply. "Besides, I must tell you that the whole affair seems to me more than unusual. Such a meeting between husband and wife, after one has just escaped death, is certainly not as it ought to be. It, of course, does not concern me," he added, turning to leave the room.

Emma and Helen looked into each other's eyes in silence; then the former with a roguish smile, addressed the doctor:

"May I ask you to leave me alone with my friend for a few moments? With all due respect to your knowledge, I believe in this case I shall prove the best doctor. You will see wonders."

She looked at him with such a bewitching smile that he pressed her hand. "Very well; I willingly leave the field to so pretty a colleague."

"One thing more, doctor; do not be too hard on the poor Major. You might regret it later and have to apologise," warned Emma, threateningly lifting her finger. "I shall

soon follow you; until then I beg you not to mention my arrival."

As soon as the door had closed the two friends fell into each other's arms, and, laughing and crying, Helen confessed everything that had occurred since morning—the trip, the interesting conversation, and—oh! the shameful falsehood, with its dreadful consequences.

"Save me, Emma," she closed her story. "You started the trouble, and now see that you send the Major away, and, above all, explain to Professor Roditz——" She turned aside in confusion. "Explain everything to him, as it would be unbearable to be misunderstood by him."

"Oh, oh!" laughed Emma, "you seem very much concerned about the Professor. Don't worry, I will explain everything, and take all the blame, which will be quite fair. But I am forgetting the embarrassing situation in which I am leaving the Major. What will the doctor and the Professor do to him? And I promised to come in a moment."

One kiss and she was gone. Helen drew a long breath and lay back on the couch, her eyes resting dreamily on the green foliage outside the window, while a happy smile overspread her face.

During the interview between Helen and Emma, an angry discussion had taken place between Professor Roditz and Major Fritters, and a challenge seemed imminent. In most violent terms the Professor had reproached the supposed husband for his want of feeling and heartless indifference towards his wife.

This was too much for the Major, although he knew that the Professor laboured under a mistake. He, too, lost his temper, for supposing things were as the others believed, what right had he to interfere in his domestic affairs?

His rough reply: "That does not concern you," only served to enrage the Professor still more. Fortunately, the entrance of the doctor and Emma put an end to this stormy interview. Roditz hastened towards her, and, grasping her hand, exclaimed: "Thank Heaven that you are here. Perhaps you will be able to influence the husband of your poor friend."

Emma laughed, and looked roguishly from one to the other. 'Professor—Major," she began, with two graceful courtesies, permit me to introduce the guardian angel as Emma Wahren, the most intimate friend of the pretty unfortunate, about whom you seem to have exchanged some unpleasant words."

"Pardon," hastily interrupted the Professor; "in this great excitement——"

"We forgot to introduce ourselves," finished the Major.

"That is unnecessary, as I just came from Helen, who mentioned your names. Yours"—turning to the Professor with mock gravity—"I have of course known for a long time; even so insignificant and prosaic a person as I am, know of the famous explorer. But your most poetic name," she continued, mischievously turning to the Major, "greets my ear to-day for the first time."

"For the first time?" interrupted the Professor, still very much excited; "do not torment me with a cruel joke."

"Cruel joke? I do not dream of such a cruel thing," replied Emma. "For although Helen is my friend, it does not follow that she is the wife of this much-abused man, who has endured so many trials to-day."

She smiled pleasantly to the Major, whose face had brightened. He bent over her hand and kissed it enthusiastically.

"I do not understand a word of all this," said Roditz, annoyed, "you are jesting, while I——"

"While you consider the Major a barbarous tyrant and me a foolish girl. But you will have to do penance, my dear Professor, for you must know," here she drew herself up, "Helen Elden, my friend is—unmarried."

"Unmarried?" exclaimed the Professor, with a radiant face, "unmarried!" For a few moments he remained speechless with emotion.

"But," he stammered at last, "how could Miss Elden deceive me so?"

"Hush, hush, Professor, do not judge her hastily, as you did the poor Major. Helen is innocent, and has suffered sufficiently through my careless joke. I shall presently, as the only guilty one, make full confession, but first make amends to your deplorable victim here."

The Professor advanced to the Major.

"Can you forgive me all that this wretched misunderstanding has led me to say?"

"Do not mention it," laughed the Major good-naturedly, "but I should really like to know——"

"So would I," said Doctor Velden. But as I have to go to the station now, I propose we all spend the evening here together. Then Miss Wahren must tell us everything most explicitly."

The doctor's proposition was accepted.

While Emma and the Major, with whom it seemed a case of love at first sight, entered into an animated conversation, Professor Roditz had slipped into the adjoining room, where Helen rested in an easy chair by the open window.

A slight noise made her look round. With a joyous cry she tried to rise, but the Professor knelt down by her side and gently pressed her back into the chair.

"Helen, Helen"—that was all his trembling lips could utter. A few moments later she lay in his arms.

A. A. Altroff.

Roditz hastened towards her, and grasping her hand, exclaimed: "Thank Heaven, you are here."

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A Rival in the Case.

"Hello, Fitzy! where did you get that black eye?" "Oh, it was only a lovers' quarrel." "Lovers' quarrel! Why, your girl did not give you that, did she?" "No, it was her other lover."

A Doubtful Compliment.

Over the shop door of a pork-butcher in a village in the eastern counties may be seen a signboard representing a man in a black coat brandishing a hatchet, with the inscription: "John Smith kills pigs like his father."

The Pickpocket's Trick.

A joyous damsel rushed into a citizen's arms at London Bridge, exclaiming: "Oh, you are my long-lost brother!" She soon discovered her mistake, and rushed off in a confused manner, accompanied by her long-lost brother's purse!

Still a Chance.

Young Mr. Billington: "Amy, my love, I wish we lived in the good old days, when a knight could fight for his lady-love." Miss Coolington: "Why, George, dear, as for that, you haven't asked papa's consent to our engagement yet, you know."

A Decided Advantage.

Furniture Dealer (to elderly spinster): "And there is another advantage, ma'am, which the folding-bed has over the ordinary kind." Elderly Spinster: "What is that, sir?" Furniture Dealer: "You don't have to look under it to see if there is a man there."

The Horse Didn't Know.

Nelly (sympathetically): "You poor dear! What a narrow escape! And what startled the horse?" Gussy (indignantly): "Well, you know, Will was just helping me out of the dog-cart, and—the stupid horse could not tell the difference between a good-night kiss and a signal to start. And he started. Some horses have so little sense."

Far too Risky.

"Well, Mr. Smythe, you've passed your examination very satisfactorily. But stay—what is your profession?" asked the insurance company man. "I am—er—er—a poet," said Smythe, blushing. "Oh, and do you take or send your poems?" "I usually call with them," said the rhymester. "In that case, Mr. Smythe," said the official, shutting his book with a snap, "we certainly shouldn't think of insuring your life! Good morning!"

He Wanted a Smoke.

Marie: "Why is Mr. Puffer in such a hurry to marry Maud?" Arthur: "He promised her he wouldn't smoke while they were engaged."

Quite Safe.

Doctor: "Your wife is very ill, sir, and likely to die." Husband: "You needn't worry about her, doctor. She got a new dress the other day, and she hasn't tried it on yet."

Practical Advice.

Domestic: "Plaze, mum, I'd like to hev a lookin'-glass in th' kitchen." Mistress (a practical housewife): "Keep this tinware well scoured, Mary, and you won't need one."

Could Do It Better Himself.

Mamma: "When that boy threw stones at you, why didn't you come and tell me instead of throwing them back?" Little Son: "Tell you! Why, you couldn't hit a barn door."

Only a Part Author.

"Yes, that's a capital article; I didn't think you had got it in you to write as well as that." "Well, I'm only what you may call part author." "Oh, is that so? What part are you responsible for?" "Well, the italics are mine."

Stood by Him.

Mrs. Prentice: "How do you always manage to have such delicious beef?" Mrs. Bywell: "I select a good honest butcher, and then stand by him." Mrs. Prentice: "You mean that you give him all your trade." Mrs. Bywell: "No, I mean that I stand by him while he is cutting off the meat."

Telephoning Made Easy.

Employer: "You are having a decided flirtation with the girl who has charge of our telephone wire." Truthful Clerk (with cold chills running up and down his spine, and with visions of instant discharge): "Y-e-e-s, sir; but please, sir——" Employer: "Well, keep it up. She will give more attention to our calls, if you do."

More Powerful than Orpheus.

"That is Orpheus," said the young man, "he was a wonderful musician. He was such a wonderful player as to move trees and stones." "Really?" replied the old gentleman, looking at the statue in a contemplative mood. "Not so bad; but you never heard that cousin of ours play. She's only a little puny thing, but they do say she's made no fewer than twenty whole families move, and I fancy it's no more'n the truth."

Value for Money.

I was travelling from Inverness to London, and my only companion in the third-class carriage was an elderly Highlander, who sat in the corner with his plaid wrapped round him, and an expression of supreme content on his countenance, only stirring occasionally for the purpose of taking a swig at his flask of mountain dew. Not a word was passed for some two hours, and then, tiring of the monotony, I ventured to suggest: "This is a fatiguing journey." "Ay, and so it ocht to be," was the reply. "Twa poun's twa shillin's, and saxpence."

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Amelia's Mother.

How a Girl's Chances of Marriage were Nearly Spoilt by her Mother.

Amelia Johnson was a remarkably pretty and attractive girl. There could be no doubt of that.

Her nose, it is true, was distinctly *retroussé*, and her mouth might have been just a trifle large for beauty. But then, nobody ever dreamt of taking Amelia's nose, or her mouth, by itself, and proceeding to criticise it in cold blood. That would have been like taking a single weak line out of some clever book, and condemning the book on the merits of that line alone.

"No; it was the *tout ensemble* of Amelia that her admirers looked at—the nose and the mouth taken in combination with a pair of wonderful grey eyes, an exquisite complexion, two rows of pearly teeth, a trim little figure, and a ready tongue that seldom spoke ill of anyone.

A fresh, sweet, wholesome, healthy-minded girl, that is what Amelia was and looked like, and that is what invariably captivated her admirers until—until they met her mother.

Now, the sight of Amelia's mother had precisely the same effect upon all Amelia's admirers.

One by one they would pause—hesitate—and go away again, usually for ever.

It was noticeable that those who did not go away, but merely paused and hesitated, got no further with Amelia.

From the moment they beheld Amelia's mother, their admiration of the daughter seemed to pale perceptibly. They would grow inattentive and absent-minded. Their eyes would wander from the daughter's to the mother's face and back again in pained surprise, and the result was always the same. After more or less mature deliberation, they invariably came to the conclusion that they were unworthy of Amelia, and proceeded to bestow their attentions upon some other girl, not so pretty, nor so bright, nor so clever as Amelia, but—not with Amelia's mother.

Occasionally, one more outspoken than the rest would confide the reason of his conduct to his friends.

"She's too like her mother," he would remark, gloomily, and those who knew Amelia's mother understood and sympathised.

Now, it is quite possible that a pretty woman may bear a striking resemblance to a plain one. Yet men are slow to grasp this fact, and where a charming girl resembles her anything but charming mother, the charm of the former is apt to fade in men's eyes at sight of the latter.

Because the girl was like her mother, they argued that Amelia, at her mother's age, would be her mother's image.

Poor Amelia!

Mrs. Johnson, certainly, was not a pleasing object to look upon. But then, she had not had a pleasing life. Fate had been unkind to her, and Fate's unkindness is no beautifier.

In the first place, Mrs. Johnson's husband had always been a trial to her. He was not exactly a bad man. He never beat her, or starved her, but—he illtreated her all the same, for he habitually kept her short of money.

What other women did with twenty shillings, Mrs. Johnson had to do with nineteen.

What pitiful economies, and scraping, what unspeakable humiliation and anxiety Amelia's mother had to bear because of that odd shilling that was always missing!

Her married life had been one long struggle to make both ends meet. Is it to be wondered at if the wrinkles gathered thickly upon her brow, if the light faded from her eyes and the colour from her cheeks, and ugly, fretful lines drew down the corners of her mouth?

It is easy to preach Mark Tapley's philosophy, but far less easy to practise it. Poor Mrs. Johnson did neither. From the end of the honeymoon to the day on which Amelia's first admirer presented himself before her, she had muddled her dreary way through life as best she might, and, as the years went by, the hard lines in her face grew harder, angles appeared where nature had intended curves, and curves where straight lines should have been.

At first, her mirror told its tale with brutal frankness. She looked at herself, and became, first despondent, and then indifferent.

"I'm growing old and ugly before my time," she told herself.

She was never one to make the best of things. By almost imperceptible degrees she put off, one by one, all those innocent little vanities which every self-respecting woman loves.

She grew careless in her dress, and began to go about the house in slovenly, ill-fitting garments, "for the sake of comfort." It is a bad sign when a woman begins to talk of comfort as opposed to beauty.

"Anything is good enough to do housework in," she said, and in time she became so accustomed to the tattered, stained blue skirt and dingy blouse that formed her working-garb, that she ceased to notice the stains and tatters, and made no attempt to remedy either.

By and bye she came to accept her unlovely appearance as a matter of course, and presently the faculty for self-criticism deserted her altogether. As the years went by, she neglected herself more and more, until she came to be as her daughter's first admirer saw her.

Bob Amies had been wonderfully taken with Amelia, and before he had known her twenty-four hours, he had made up his mind to ask her to be his wife.

Then Mrs. Johnson appeared upon the scene, and Bob felt as though a hose had suddenly been turned on upon the flame of his affections.

Could this really be Amelia's mother, or was it some awful apparition of his distorted fancy?

He rubbed his eyes, half hoping to find he had been dreaming, but Amelia's mother did not fade away.

No; she continued to sit opposite to Bob, no mere vision of a nightmare, but a creature of flesh and blood, uncompromisingly real and plain, a horrid travesty upon Amelia.

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One by one he dug out, as it were, Amelia's features from the *débris* of Mrs. Johnson's face.

The nose he recognised at once. It was broader than Amelia's. But then, noses deteriorate with age. It required no great effort of Bob's imagination to picture Amelia's nose, in years to come, just such another as her mother's.

The mouth, too, was unmistakable, alas—Amelia's mouth without its sweetness and humour, without its rows of pearly teeth—ephemeral charms, as Bob acknowledged with a groan.

Then, there were the eyes, eyes of the same shape, the same colour. But would Amelia's ever look as dull and listless as her mother's, with their faded lashes, and their environment of crows' feet? Could it be that Mrs. Johnson's had once flashed with that joyous light that made Amelia's beautiful? Well, such things were possible. Amelia's eyes might, at her mother's age, be dull and listless too.

It had not struck Bob, until he saw Mrs. Johnson, how much Amelia owed to her complexion. He remembered now how few women over thirty have fine complexions. The chances, then, were that Amelia at forty would have an unhealthy-looking skin, just like her mother's.

And then, the wrinkles that disfigured Mrs. Johnson's face! Bob didn't know the secret of those distressing lines. There was no one to tell him that Amelia's mother had had more than the common share of sordid worries.

As Bob's eyes wandered over the uncomely lines of Mrs. Johnson's figure, he fancied he could trace therein the gradual deterioration of Amelia's girlish form. He did not see how much of that deterioration was owing to neglect, and how the slovenly gown she wore emphasised each ugly line.

He saw Amelia's mother as she was, and fancied he saw Amelia as she would be. Then, good-bye for ever to Amelia!

And what Bob Amies saw, they all saw, that long procession of admirers who came and went away again.

Amelia saw it too, and understood.

The disappearance of the suitors did not trouble her. She had cared for none of them—so far. It was the reason of their disappearance that enraged and grieved her. She felt—ashamed of her mother, and ashamed of being ashamed.

To the young men themselves she gave very little thought. She had never been in love—until John Marsden came.

The moment Amelia saw John, she knew that her fate was sealed; and the moment John saw Amelia, he knew that *his* fate was sealed.

"I shall marry that girl or die a bachelor," he said to himself, and began, forthwith, to lay siege to Amelia's heart.

Amelia made a brave show of resistance—as a matter of duty, for she had been well brought up. But John, nothing daunted, continued the siege, and, at the first sign of yielding on her part, he ventured to ask permission to call upon Amelia at her parents' house.

"I have never had the pleasure of meeting your father and mother," he remarked, unprepared for the effect his words would have upon Amelia.

The girl looked as frightened and distressed as though she had suddenly learnt some terrible news, and John waited, in some trepidation, for her answer.

"My mother will be pleased to see you," she said, at last, in a faint voice, and John puzzled his brains in vain to find some reason for the sudden change in her.

He would have been still more puzzled could he have seen the tears Amelia shed that night in her room.

"He will go away like the rest," she sobbed. "It's hard—very hard," and with the tears trickling down her pretty face, she stared at her own reflection in the glass, and wished she were not so like her mother, and hated herself for wishing it.

But John Marsden did not go away, like the rest. He stayed, and made friends with Mrs. Johnson, and came again, and one day he asked Amelia to be his wife.

He scarcely expected Amelia's answer.

"Think of me at forty-five!" she said, tremulously.

He looked into her face and saw that she was quite serious. But the words required some explanation.

Reluctantly, and with burning cheeks and eyes averted, she told him everything.

"You will think it hateful of me to speak like this of my own mother," she ended, "but I can't help it. I tried so hard not to see it, but I had to. I can't be blind, though perhaps I ought to be. It has always troubled me, and, since I have known you, it has made me wretched."

"Which means that I am the happiest fellow in the world!" cried John, taking her suddenly in his arms.

John was always quick to seize an advantage.

"You haven't answered my question yet," said Amelia, presently. Her voice now, for reasons which need not here be dwelt upon, sounded strangely muffled. "How is it you don't feel like the others? Don't you"—it was very hard to say it—"don't you disapprove of mother's looks, and—and——"

John became suddenly very serious.

"I'll be frank with you, dearest," he said. "I have the greatest respect for your mother, but not for her appearance. If I thought you would ever come to look like that——"

He drew a deep breath.

"That's what the others thought," whispered Amelia.

"But you never will," said John, eagerly. "I swear you never will. Shall I tell you why? It's because you won't lead your mother's life, you won't suffer as she is suffering, I won't let you, I won't allow——"

"Does my mother suffer?" interrupted Amelia, in an awed and startled voice. "What makes you say that? How do you know? She has never breathed a word to me."

"Forgive my saying so, dear," he replied, "but I believe I understand your mother better than you do. Has it never occurred to you that she lies awake, night after night, planning and contriving how to pay the butcher and the baker?"

"She never speaks of money matters to me," said Amelia, still in the same startled voice. "I never thought, I never guessed—oh, how do you know?"

"It is written in her face," said John, "and in her voice, in every look, and tone, and action. There are thousands of women like her, Amelia, women who've had a rough time all their lives, who've had the heart taken out of them by the miserable struggle to make both ends meet. Good heavens! And people expect women like that to be bright and amiable!"

The tears were running down Amelia's face.

"I—I'm beginning to see," she said. "How blind, and selfish I've been! Why couldn't I guess? Why couldn't I understand her as you do? Oh John, is it too late? Can't I help her now?"

"Of course you can," returned John, promptly; "but you'll require somebody else's assistance. Amelia, darling, are you prepared to make a tremendous sacrifice?"

"Anything in the world, John."

"Well, then," said John, slowly and impressively, "since want of money is at the bottom of all your mother's troubles, you'll have to marry money!"

Amelia uttered a little cry.

"You—you tell me to do this?" she gasped.

"It is the only way," replied John, with an unmoved face.

"In that case," returned Amelia, with biting sarcasm, "perhaps you will also be good enough to provide the necessary husband."

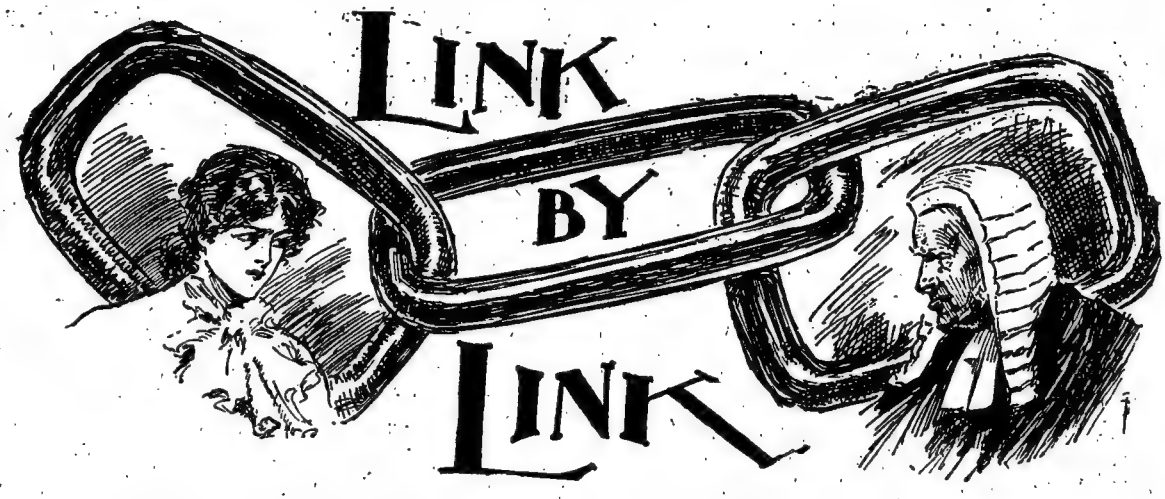
"I shall be pleased to do so," said John, with the same calm manner. "I've thought of someone who, I think, might suit you. He's got a very decent banking-account, and he's not a bad sort of chap. His name is already familiar to you."

"Indeed! Then may I inquire what it is?"

"John Marsden."

"Oh, John!"

Grete Hahn.



Principal Characters in the Story.

Gerald Mortimer: Of Moulstone Manor, in love with Nina Penhurst.

Mrs. Mortimer: Gerald's mother.

Dr. Branksome: Medical attendant at Moulstone asylum, a great friend of Gerald.

Anthony (or Felix) Cordelvin: An inmate of Moulstone asylum, who was found murdered.

Nina Penhurst: Governess at Moulstone Manor, a distant relative of Cordelvin.

Roderick Vanstone: Nina's guardian. He lives at Streatham, and has under his charge a man named Cordelvin, of weak intellect, whose estate, held in trust for Nina, he manages.

Stephen Vanstone: Roderick Vanstone's son.

The woman in the dark blue cloak: She was seen at Moulstone on the night of the murder, and has acted rather suspiciously since.

Stebbings and Burge: Men employed by Vanstone.

Inspector Trench: Of Scotland Yard, who is intrusted with the task of discovering the murderer of Cordelvin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Inside the Old House.

WHATEVER mysteries there were contained in that house; whatever clues to crimes at present undefined might be concealed therein, there was little to suggest either, in that long, oblong room known as the library. A couch, two or three comfortable arm-chairs and half-a-dozen ordinary chairs were dotted about; while turned anglewise, and half facing the big diamond-paned window was a dark oak desk, matching in colour the book-cases which lined the opposing wall.

Inspector Trench took the details in in a moment, and quickly resolved that little or nothing was to be gathered from their contemplation. Failing an examination of the interior of the desk, the officer felt that nothing he saw would advance him much on his voyage of discovery.

At the same time he was wondering what sort of an excuse he could invent to look over the house. Despite the invitation which Ned Stebbings had extended to them to rest in the library, the detective found himself still strongly of opinion that the man was telling a lie when he maintained that Mr. Vanstone had gone away. But, naturally, he could not betray this lack of faith in the man's word without creating suspicion; a thing he did not wish to do at present. Hence his quandary. Having secured an entry to the house so expeditiously, he did not wish to spoil his investigations by too precipitate action. That he was on a hot trail he felt convinced, but, after all, his beliefs were largely theories, unbacked by any convincing facts.

So while he sat there in the library with Nina Penhurst and Doctor Branksome, and racked his brains for an excuse to explore the house. For some time he could think of none, and was slowly coming to the decision that he would have to take a bold course, when, by a fortuitous circumstance, Stebbings once more entered the room and saved him all further trouble in the matter.

"Excuse me," remarked Stebbings, "but I've jest thought that as the lady's here, she mebbe 'ud like to look over the old place."

Inspector Trench glanced up in amazement. The strange anticipation of his intended request took him aback. There is as much ground for suspicion in a too ready confidence in a stranger as there is in a too reluctant, and this unexpected burst of ingenuousness, this sort of implied "we court inquiry" invitation had not entered into his calculations. Still, the opportunity seemed too good a one to miss, and he promptly answered for Nina.

"Yes, we were just discussing what a quaint, rambling old place the house is, and I am sure Miss Penhurst would like to renew her acquaintance with it."

"Then perhaps you'll kindly come with me." Stebbings answered, and forthwith led the way.

As with his companions the inspector followed the man from room to room, he gradually felt growing within him a sense of disappointment. Despite the odd, romantic look of the house, and the cloak of mystery with which, to the detective's mind, circumstances had enveloped it, nothing he encountered in that tour of inspection seemed to further him in his purpose.

Except that in several rooms the furniture was very sparse, it might have been the house of any well-to-do and perfectly respectable citizen. Nothing at all was there to arouse suspicion or to strengthen that which was already in existence.

In his own mind Trench was admitting that on this, his first visit to the old house, he had drawn a blank. Evidently what Stebbings had said about the absence of his master was too true, for there was no sign of him in the house. Every room had been visited, and there was no excuse for staying longer—nor any good to be gained by so doing.

The officer turned to Stebbings. "Thank you," he said, "for allowing us to look over the old place, it is very interesting. We are sorry Mr. Vanstone is away, but doubtless he will be back in a few days, and we will then do ourselves the honour of calling——"

The officer suddenly broke off in his speech. A scream, weird and long drawn out, had rung through the house and interrupted him. His face took upon it a look of surprised inquiry.

"What was that?" he asked, and glanced quickly at Stebbings. The latter's face had gone blood-red, and then

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turned ghastly white. His jaws moved convulsively, but he uttered no word.

"What was that?" the detective repeated more sternly.

Again Stebbings' jaws moved. "Nothing!" he replied with an attempt at self-control; "that is to say, somebody out in the road screaming, probably."

The detective eyed him with an eagle glance.

"Look here," he replied in a tone that echoed through the room in which they were standing. "That won't do. That scream came from somewhere in this house, and you know it. It was a woman—tell me where she is!"

For answer, Stebbings stepped back a yard, his face to his questioner, and his hand diving into his pocket. It was out in a second clutching a shining six-chambered revolver. But Inspector Trench was too quick for him. He had been in similar positions before, and instinct had told him what Stebbings was about to do. Without a moment's hesitation, therefore, he had dashed at the man, and almost as soon as the weapon appeared had knocked it out of his hand.

Then, with the perfect ease of practice he had thrown Stebbings on to his back, and with his knee on his chest had snapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists in a trice.

"Doctor Branksome," he said quietly, "Fetch in a couple of my men to look after this fellow. I'll hold him till you return."

"Now then," he went on, when this order had been carried out. "I think we may go and investigate. That cry, if I heard aright, came from underneath somewhere. There are evidently cellars to this house."

As he spoke he led the way out into a passage, and walked towards the rear of the house. As he entered the kitchen there came a repetition of the cry which had aroused his attention.

"Where did that scream come from?" he demanded.

"From the basement, undoubtedly," Doctor Branksome answered.

"So I think, and there must be cellars underneath; but where the dickens is the entrance to them?" The detective was examining panels and throwing back rugs as he spoke, searching for some hidden door or trap. But try as he and the doctor might, they could find nothing of the kind.

"The entrance to the cellars is concealed," the detective murmured after a thorough search. "We shall have to get the man we have captured to tell us where it is."

But Stebbings was altogether too disinclined to fall in with this suggestion. Despite persistent questions he sullenly and doggedly maintained that there were no underground apartments that he knew of.

"Very well, then," observed Inspector Trench to the doctor, "We shall have to find the way ourselves. I'll find those cellars if I have to pull the house down to do it.

Then ensued a most rigorous search. Walls were tapped to test their solidity; carpets were dragged off the floors to see if by any chance they concealed anything in the nature of a trap door, but, as before, the search went unrewarded.

The inspector passed into a small room adjoining what was evidently the pantry.

There was scarcely any furniture in it. It looked indeed as if it had been used as a lumber room. Only against the opposite wall stood a large, long, oaken wardrobe. The detective eyed it casually for a moment, then a thought suddenly struck him.

"Doctor," he said, "doesn't it strike you as queer to find a handsome piece of furniture like that stowed away in a room like this?"

"Well, perhaps so——"

"It's locked too. I say, doctor, I should like to see behind it. It's more than big enough to hide a door, and by Jove, the narrow space behind it is boarded up, and see, here it's fixed to the wall. Now that looks suspicious."

"What do you suspect?"

"That the entrance to the cellars is behind this wardrobe. I feel certain of it. People don't screw furniture like this to the wall for nothing. Half a minute, there's a little vacant space at the top. Give me a hoist up. I may be able to see if there's a door behind. Thanks, that's right! I want to stand on your shoulders."

Standing as he had said, the officer struck a match and peered down behind the wardrobe. But his view was interrupted suddenly. For as he peered, there was a sound as of a light door being burst open, and a moment later the panels of the wardrobe flew forward, and from between them there leapt a man!

The unexpected occurrence startled Doctor Branksome. He moved suddenly where he stood, causing the detective standing on his shoulders to lose his balance. The latter, finding he must fall, put out a great effort and sprang forward and downward just as the man issued from the wardrobe. By a fortuitous circumstance the officer landed right on top of the man, bringing him to the ground like an ox, and sprawling himself on top of him. Quickly the officer recovered himself and rose to a kneeling position. The other man still lay prone upon the ground in a dazed condition, during which time Inspector Trench seized the opportunity of snapping a pair of handcuffs on his wrists. Presently the man turned a little and groaned, then slowly opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he inquired wonderingly.

"You're in custody!" the inspector replied laconically.

"The devil!" cried the man, looking up in alarm.

"No, merely plain Inspector Trench," the other replied, "the other gentleman you mention will have you later on, Mr. Burge."

* * * * *

"Well, as the game's up as far as I am concerned, I may as well help you all I can," observed Burge a few minutes later, for he it was.

"That's a wise course," remarked the detective. "It will save me a lot of trouble."

"And it'll help me, won't it?" Burge inquired anxiously.

"Yes, I suppose so," returned the officer, his manner not altogether free from contempt. "King's Evidence men always get off lightly."

"Well then, I'm a-goin' to help you. Here's my keys o' the cellars, Mr. Inspector, and the entrance is *through the wardrobe*.—You'll find that piece of furniture has had a piece taken out of its back; that was Roderick Vanstone's cute way of hidin' the door."

"Where is Mr. Vanstone?"

"Gone away—him and his son, both. They tumbled to the fact as somethin' was goin' to 'appen, and got clear off last night, leaving Stebbings and me to face the music. I owe Mr. Vanstone one for that, and I'll get as much of my own back by tellin' you all I know."

"Who is shut up in the cellar? Who was it that screamed?"

"Oh, that was a woman. I was down there on purpose to try and keep her quiet. But you'll get more than one surprise when you get down there."

"Come, then," replied the inspector, "you can show us the way."

Taking a lantern with them they passed through the wardrobe and the door which it concealed, and found themselves presently descending a short flight of stone steps. At the foot of these, running right and left, was a passage, along which at intervals could be discovered three or four doors, for all the world like cell doors in a prison corridor.

"Here is the first," Burge murmured to the inspector, "and that there is the key," pointing with his manacled hands to one on the bunch which he had handed over to the officer.

The officer took hold of the key, pushed it into the lock, and turned it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A Startling Statement.

The cellar into which the detective, the doctor, and Burge stepped was in complete darkness, and for a moment, they could see nothing. But the swinging rays from the lantern which the officer carried presently revealed an unexpected sight. Huddled up in a heap, face downwards on the cold, moist floor, lay a woman.

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"Hullo!" exclaimed the inspector, and stopped dead in astonishment. The sight of physical distress aroused Doctor Branksome immediately, and in an instant he was by the woman's side, his hand on her heart.

"Thank God, she's alive!" he murmured. "It's the woman we saw—Ruth Cordelvin. She's in a swoon, and, Good Heavens, what's this?"

He passed his hand over her head as he spoke and quickly withdrew it red with blood. "How did she come with this?" he asked sternly of Burge.

"I had to give her a tap on the head," Burge replied callously. "She would keep on screamin' the place down."

"It's fortunate for you she isn't dead, you cowardly brute!" the doctor returned hotly. "And then to leave her down here in an unconscious state."

"Well, I had to look after myself, you know," returned Burge, scarcely abashed.

"You won't have to trouble about that again for some time," broke in the inspector drily. "You'll be looked after by other people."

"Give me a hand, inspector," the doctor ordered. "We must get this woman out of this."

Even as he spoke there came a shout—a cry, half appeal, half frantic delight.

"Branksome, is that your voice? Come to me!"

"Good Heavens! I know that voice, surely. Inspector—"

There was no need to prompt the officer to action, for directly he realised that the shout came apparently from an adjoining cellar, he had sprung across and in a moment had the door leading into it open.

Holding the lantern aloft, he peered in. Used as he was to dramatic scenes in real life, the inspector started to see a man chained to the wall.

"Why, good gracious!" he called out, "if it isn't Mr. Gerald Mortimer."

"Yes, it's I!" the prisoner returned, "and right glad am I to see you. Can you manage to get these infernal manacles off?"

"In the tenth part of a jiffy," the officer responded, stepping back. "Now then, you Burge, which is the key to these bracelets?"

"The smallest on the bunch!"

In less time than it takes to tell, the detective had unlocked the handcuffs, and Gerald Mortimer stood there a free man.

"What can I say to thank you?" he began, but the inspector stopped him abruptly.

"Please don't say anything just now, I'm busy," he observed bluntly. "There's a lady out there unconscious, and," he added with a twinkle in his eye, "there's another young lady upstairs—who will be glad to see you again."

"A lady—who is it?"

"Miss Penhurst!"

"Nina—Miss Penhurst here?"

"You'll find her upstairs."

So absolutely selfish is a man in love, that Gerald simply flew out of the cellar and up the stairs without so much as speaking to, or even noticing his friend Doctor Branksome. Although he knew not where Nina was, he quickly found her, some subtle instinct guiding his steps.

"My darling!" he cried, with arms outstretched, and careless whether anybody heard or not.

Nina was near to fainting at his sudden appearance, but she recovered herself and returned his embrace, as oblivious of the outer world as he was.

For a few minutes neither could say anything, so burdened was each heart with feelings of joy and relief, but when the period of composure came, Gerald poured into Nina's tenderly sympathetic ear the story of his kidnapping and imprisonment.

Meanwhile Doctor Branksome had had Ruth Cordelvin carried on to a couch, where he skilfully attended to her wound on the head.

"She'll be all right now," he declared to the inspector after a time, "I've managed to restore consciousness, but now she's gone off to sleep. That will do her good."

"When she wakes it won't be a very cheerful awakening," remarked the detective.

A Popular Actress's Misfortune.

ALL London was startled a few weeks ago by the announcement of the retirement from the stage of a certain beautiful and popular actress. Many rumours were at once spread as to what led her to abandon the stage, but the truth has only just leaked out. The hot and unhealthy air of the theatre did not agree with her, and she began to suffer from skin disfigurement in the shape of serious eruptions and pimples. These became so bad that eventually she had to give up her important engagement and retire. This should serve to warn readers of the seriousness of skin eruptions. For all skin eruptions and diseases Bile Beans for Biliousness are a certain remedy. The following case gives proof. Miss Bessie Denbury lives with her parents in Washford, Somerset. "For over three years," said Mrs. Denbury to a *Somerset County Express* reporter, "Bessie was dreadfully disfigured with an outbreak of pimples and skin blotches. First of all they appeared all over her face, and then quickly spread until her whole body was covered."

"Yes," interposed Bessie, whose bright sparkling eyes and clear complexion now denote perfect health, "I was so bad that I never liked to be seen in public. My face was completely disfigured, and my mouth drawn all on one side. The flesh was lumpy and discoloured. The pimples enlarged and burst like gatherings, causing fearful pain. More than once I have been in such agony that I have fainted away. Often I have been unable to hold myself up; so weak and sickly did I become. I had only a poor appetite, and felt disinclined to go in for exercise. It was an utterly wretched feeling that overwhelmed me." "We had medicine supplied from a chemist," broke in Mrs. Denbury, "but Bessie's ailment was so serious that he could not do her the least good. We tried various measures, which were equally unavailing; and the case had apparently grown hopeless, when our attention was drawn to the fact that BILE BEANS had been found extremely beneficial in like cases. Bessie sent for some, and was so relieved in general health by them that she obtained a larger supply. It was not very long before I noticed a remarkable improvement in her appearance. Little by little, the swellings and blotches became less; the gatherings healed; and to-day, so far from being troubled at all with pimples or any other disfigurements, her whole skin is absolutely clear. She also feels as different again in health and spirits, being able to eat and sleep well and take exercise like anyone of her age should."

Bile Beans for Biliousness which accomplished the above cure, are purely vegetable in composition, and their excellence has been so well proved that many eminent doctors are now prescribing them largely. They are a certain cure for Skin Disfigurement, Pimples, Blotches, Rashes, and all Blood Impurities, also for Congestion of the Liver, Headache, Neuralgia, Fainting Fits, Constipation, Piles, Anæmia, Attacks of Dizziness, Biliousness, Indigestion, Flatulence, Pains in the Chest, Loins or Back, Defective Secretion of Bile, Wasting Affections, Female Ailments, and of ailments having a common origin in impurity of the blood, a general congestion of the system, and loss of vital force. Obtainable from all Chemists or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 and 120 London Wall, London, E.C., upon receipt of prices, one and three-halfpence or two and nine.

"How do you mean?"

"I shall have to arrest her, you know."

"Oh, yes, of course. Events have moved so quickly that I had forgotten. Meantime she must be carefully looked after. How can I get a nurse for her?"

"I'll send a message round to the local police-station," returned Inspector Trench. "They're sure to know of some reliable woman."

Duly the temporary nurse—Mrs. South—came, and at once entered upon her duties.

After two or three hours Ruth Cordelvin awoke, and declaring herself to be feeling quite well, was allowed to get up. She was duly conducted to the room where the detective and doctor awaited her.

"Ah, good morning," greeted the former politely, "I trust you are feeling quite yourself again, Miss Cordelvin."

The woman blanched at the last words, and turned on the officer with a look of fury.

"Why do you call me that?" she demanded angrily, "My name is Miss Richardson."

"Excuse me, madam, I am referring to your real name.

The woman looked towards the door as if she would have made towards it. A flush came into her face now.

"Who are you to talk to me in this manner?" she asked.

"I am Detective Trench, of Scotland Yard, madam."

Once more she looked at the door, and now she did make a step in its direction.

"Good morning," she said, with an effort at self-control, "I am going, I have been long enough in this wicked house."

"Not so fast, please, madam," the officer observed, rising quickly and placing himself between the woman and the door, "I am sorry, but there is a little formality to go through. I have to inform you that I hold a warrant for your arrest."

At the words the woman staggered back, clutching a chair for support.

"My arrest!" she gasped, white now to the lips. "Why would you arrest me? I am not mad, I tell you."

"No one has said you are, madam, I think."

"Then why would you arrest me?"

"On the charge of being concerned in the murder of Felix Cordelvin, at Moulstone."

The woman looked up quickly at the officer; then transferred her glance to Dr. Branksome, and burst into a peal of hysterical laughter.

Both men regarded her in amazement. Waiting until her laughter had subsided, the inspector said:

"This is scarcely a matter for hilarity, madam."

"But you charge me with the murder of Felix Cordelvin?"

"With complicity in the murder—I do!"

"That is what made me laugh. How do you know that Felix Cordelvin is dead?"

"His body was discovered among the castle ruins. He is dead and buried."

Once more the woman laughed hysterically.

"Fools, fools, all of you!" she cried. "Yes, a body was found, I know, and because Felix Cordelvin had been missing from the asylum, you at once concluded that the dead body was his. Fools, fools! all of you!"

The inspector flushed. "Look here, madam," he remarked, "for some purpose of your own you are trifling with me. Come, I must do my duty and arrest you."

The look of hysterical levity which had been upon the woman's face vanished on the instant. She became grave at once as she uttered clearly and emphatically:

"I swear that the body which was discovered was not that of Felix Cordelvin!"

Inspector Trench and Dr. Branksome both leapt to their feet in amazement.

"You look incredulous," the woman said, "but what I tell you is the truth. Felix Cordelvin is my brother, and he is alive."

The detective had got over his first shock of astonishment.

"Madam," he said, "what you have said has taken me by surprise, but I am ready to listen further. If the dead body was not that of Felix Cordelvin, whose was it?"

She shrank back a little at the question.

"How should I know?" she retorted. "Ask Roderick Vanstone, he can tell you all."

"He has gone away; he will be arrested when we find him. But tell me what you know. If you are not guilty you can have nothing to hide."

"I am not guilty," she cried indignantly.

"Then why hesitate to tell me what you know?"

Ruth Cordelvin did not speak for a few moments. Then, with a deep sigh preparing her words, she spoke.

"You are an officer of the law," she said to the inspector, "and you"—turning to Dr. Branksome—"are a medical man, with special knowledge, as it happens, of mental diseases. Tell me, both of you, do you think I am mad?"

The question was a surprising one, and took both men aback for a moment. Then they both assured her that they thought her perfectly sane.

"But what has your question to do with the matter?" the inspector inquired. "I asked you why you hesitated to tell me what you know?"

"I hesitated because I feared—no, no, I cannot tell you at the moment. It is too long a story. To tell you what I know is to tell you of the whole of my, and my brother's, past life. It is all written down in my diary at home. You may read it."

"You say you have written down the things we want to know in your diary?"

"Yes; it is all there, locked up in my desk at home. If you will come back with me to my flat you shall see it to-day."

"Very well, we will go at once," the inspector said. Then, going to the door, he called out to one of his men. "Hanson, you remain here. The others have taken Stebbings and Burge to the lock-up, I suppose. If Mr. Mortimer should return tell him to come on to—ah! There's a ring at the bell, perhaps that is Mr. Mortimer."

It was, and a moment later Gerald appeared.

"You've seen to Miss Penhurst, sir?" the inspector interrogated.

"Yes, I've taken her to the Charing Cross Hotel, where she will wait, in case she is wanted, till I see her again."

"That's good!"

"Any new developments?"

"Yes," the inspector answered. "This woman has told the doctor and myself some rather startling things. We are just going to her flat to get further details. You'd better come along with us."

"I think it would be better for me to follow on separately," Gerald answered; "my two previous encounters with this lady have been somewhat peculiar. I'll come on in another cab."

Even as they thus arranged it, they were suddenly interrupted by the return of one of the inspector's men, who had gone off in charge of Burge.

"Hullo, Joyce!" remarked the inspector, noticing the flurried condition of the man; "anything wrong?"

"I've come with a message, sir. Burge says you're to be sure to search the end cellar."

"The end cellar?"

"Yes, sir. He forgot to tell you while he was here."

The inspector exchanged a quick glance with Gerald. Then he looked into the library, called the doctor, and once more descended the damp and gloomy stairs. That they were on the verge of some important discovery all were convinced. But what was it to be?

The inspector fitted the key in the lock and turned it. The door swung back and they entered. Upon the ground somebody sat with head covered, apparently asleep.

They darted over to him.

"Good Heavens!" cried Gerald, with a look at the face; "it's Anthony Cordelvin!"

Dr. Branksome started back in violent surprise. Then he bent forward to scrutinise the features of Cordelvin more closely, and from under his breath came the exclamation, dramatically and reverently uttered: "My God!"

The inspector looked up. "What's the matter?" he asked.

"Matter enough!" returned the doctor; "this man whom Mr. Mortimer calls Anthony Cordelvin, is really Felix Cordelvin, the man who escaped from Moulstone Asylum!"

(To be continued.)

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Money-Making Opportunities are everywhere.

There is no reason why the year 1902 should not be the most prosperous you have ever known. If you cannot see these opportunities train your mind to do so. Riches and fame come only to those who can influence and control the minds of their fellow men. Every self-made wealthy man is a living proof of this fact. You have but one brain, one pair of hands; you can not do everything, but **you can in your own home learn** in an incredibly short time how to influence, control and direct the brains and hands of other people so as to put money into your pocket. You can bend their wills and make them do your bidding. You can learn the science of success, and pass your competitors in business, in social life, in politics or in any other direction you choose. **You can charm and fascinate** people with an irresistible power and hold their love and friendship always. You can command success in all you undertake.

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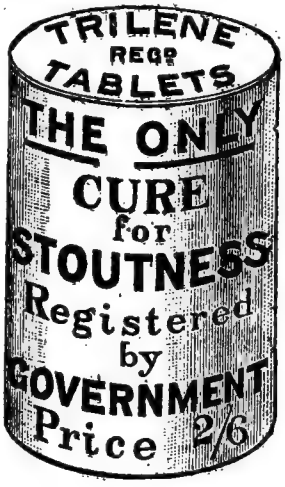

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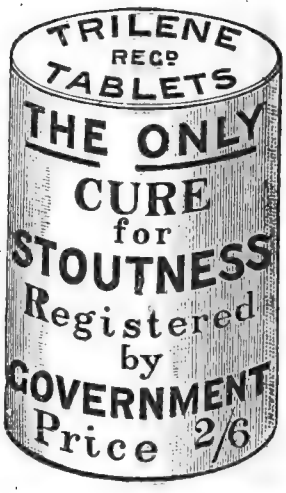

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"67 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Risholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 9st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

COUNT EHRENWAUD, of Listorp, Sweden, writes, 9th Oct., 1899: "The person who took Tablets lost 18lb. during the cure."

Mr. GIBBS, 147 Richmond Park, Kimberworth, Rotherham, says: "Since I began with them they have reduced me 2st. 8lb., and I am pleased to say I am a great deal better in health and in every way."

Mrs. FENTON, 11 Wood Street, Tyldesley, writes: "Been fat all my life, but now your Tablets tell a tale. I have lost 17lb. already and am delighted."

Mrs. MARY WILLIAMS, of Old Yard, near Bedol, Bagillt, Wales, writes Nov. 22nd, 1898: "Your Tablets reduced me 2st., and have benefited me greatly."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 23 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mrs. PEARCE, Armstrong Road, Benwell: "Reduced from 12st. to 9st., and do not get any heavier."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. ROLLITT, of North Farm, Letwell, says: "Tablets have done a world of good—reduced 14lb. already without altering diet."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 28. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Miss JANE CARTER, of Forthampton House, Tewkesbury, says: "The Tablets are of the greatest value. I am reduced many stone, and shall be pleased to recommend them."

Mr. THOS BLAKELY, of 37 The Grove, Bedford, writes: "I have lost a little over 4lb. since taking your Tablets, and my case caused much local interest."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

A SELF-SACRIFICING WIFE.

She always felt guilty that she should remain at home in comparative idleness while her husband was struggling and labouring all day long to support her in ease, and when the new carpet was brought to the house she hailed it as an opportunity to prove herself the helpmate a wife should be.

"I'll lay that carpet," she soliloquised, with a happy smile, "and won't Billy be pleased—poor fellow!"

She beamed with delight as she contemplated in thought the picture of Billy returning home that night with the unwelcome prospect of a hard evening's work laying the carpet, only to find it all done by his sweet little bride.

"Dear Billy," she murmured, as she dragged the carpet into place and knelt to her labour.

The first blow of the hammer knocked a big splinter off the wainscoting.

"Dear me," she exclaimed petulantly, "how very provoking."

She felt discouraged, but persevered.

"Poor Billy," she softly cooed.

The next blow but one, the hammer caught in her watch-chain, and broke the delicate affair into pieces.

"Pshaw!" she cried vehemently.

But there was no pausing now.

"Darling Billy."

The ninth blow descended upon her finger, The fifteenth tore a large hole in her dress.

Thus events followed rapidly for nearly two hours, when she discovered that the carpet was laid u. side down, and fainted.

Billy was summoned from the office post-haste, and found his wife prostrated and delirious.

"Poor Billy," she was moaning again and again.

Three doctors held a consultation over her that night, and the next day she was better. A week later she was convalescent. Billy sat by the bedside, and held her hand tenderly She was pale and wan, but very sweet, withal, amid the profusion of snowy fabric. For a long time she had said nothing, seemingly lost in thought.

"Billy!"

Her big eyes were resting upon him.

"Yes, dearest."

"Is there anything in all the world, Billy, so grandly heroic as the self-sacrificing love of a woman?"

Involuntarily Billy's mind dwelt for an instant upon the battered wainscoting, the broken watch-chain, the torn curtain, the ruined carpet, the doctor's bills, and he calculated with marvellous rapidity that he would be lucky if he escaped for less than £20.

"No," he cordially rejoined, "I don't think there is anything quite like it."

A faint smile played about her pale lips. For a long time she pondered. At length her look grew suddenly serious, and again her eyes rested upon the form by the bedside.

"Billy."

"Yes, dearest."

"Don't think that I blame you at all, Billy, because I don't."

Presently she fell asleep. The sigh that escaped from Billy's lips was a little one, but it was very eloquent and comprehensive.

OUR NEW STORY...

In "SHORT STORIES" dated May 17th will appear the opening chapters of a powerful new romance entitled

"Thy Will be Done."

from the pen of Mr. Henry Farmer, the gifted author of "Fettered Lives" and "As a Man Sows."

This story will equal any work that Mr. Farmer has ever done, and will hold the reader entranced from the very first chapter. It is full of dramatic situations and of human interest. No story so powerful has ever before appeared in "SHORT STORIES."

The demand for this particular issue will be so great that, unless you place an order with your newsagent at once, the chances are you will be unable to get a copy at all.

5s. a Day

FOR LIFE!

A Unique Prize Offered to Magazine Readers.

The offer of such a sum as **Five Shillings a Day for Life** at first strikes one as being merely a novelty. It is a difficult matter for people to realise what **Five Shillings a Day for Life** would actually mean to them. Of course the worse off they are financially, the more welcome would such a pension be. Perhaps you yourself are not in particular want of an extra hundred pounds a year. If that be so, then you can always do good to others by distributing it amongst the needy. On the other hand, if you feel that **Five Shillings a Day** would be useful to you, just consider for a few moments what you could really do with it, without touching your present income.

Supposing you live to the age of seventy-five—a by no means outside estimate under natural conditions—then you will have received one or other of the huge sums shown below:—

If your age now is		you will receive more than	
"	40	"	£3,150
"	30	"	£4,100
"	20	"	£5,000
"	15	"	£5,450

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

In the May "ROYAL MAGAZINE" you will find twelve pictures. Each of these pictures consists of a certain number of objects. These objects, either singly or collectively, represent the name of a town or place in the United Kingdom.

What you have to do is to find the town or place with the longest name entirely from the names of objects depicted in the pictures (or from their phonetic equivalents).

The Prize of 5s. a Day for Life

will be given to the competitor from whom the Editor of the "ROYAL MAGAZINE" receives a set of pages containing the greatest number of correct solutions.

The sum of £100 will be divided, at the discretion of the Editor, amongst those who come next.

All the names depicted in the sketches will be found printed in the list of Provincial Post Offices in the Post Office Guide, which may be consulted at any Post Office, or may be purchased for 6d.

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In Confidence

Conducted by

MADGE MORRIS.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* Short Stories.]

Should He Tell the Girl?

"W. R." has a girl friend who is receiving attentions from a man who, he has reason to believe, is given to drinking, though he poses in her presence as an abstainer. Ought "W. R." to break the news to her? If so, how can he avoid being thought a story-teller?—The fact that the man "drinks" ought not to be thought too much of, unless "W. R." believes he is given to it in excess. If he believes the latter, then he should convey it to the girl by a series of hints.

First he should let her know something of the terrors wrought in domestic life through drink. He need go no further than the daily paper to see this. He should then warn her never to become attached to a man who is given to the practice in excess, and might hint that not all those who represented themselves as abstainers were free from suspicions in that direction. She could then form her own conclusions and act as she thought best.

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Wants to Write Novels.

So, "M. A. C.," you would know the technical part of novel writing, and have a taste for writing stories, but find you cannot begin them properly nor avoid getting muddled up. Well, I am only too pleased to tell you anything you may wish to know, though don't think the paths of even a clever novelist are strewn with roses. Of all professions, that of a writer is the most unsatisfactory, so do not lightly think you will easily be able to make it a source of income.

❦❦❦

But if you really have original ideas, there is no reason why you should not develop them. Try to open your story with a sentence which will at once interest a reader by suggesting a mystery or complication which he or she will wish to probe. Try to give your reader a clear grasp of each character as you introduce them without all sorts of unnecessary description. Make them talk as men and women, not as leader writers. And, for early practice, just pick out an old story from a magazine, and try and rewrite it, bringing in the same ideas, and compare your text with that of the author. When next reading *Short Stories* you should carefully observe how each author develops his plot, and model your own style as much on his as possible, till you are clever enough to strike a line of your own.

❦❦❦

Compound Introductions.

Lambert and his young lady, Amy, went to call on Lambert's friend Jack and his wife the other day. Amy did not know her sweetheart's friend, nor his wife, while Lambert himself had no the honour of knowing Mrs. Jack. How should the task of introducing the unknown parties be conducted?—After greeting Jack, Lambert should say to him, "Let me introduce you to my friend Miss Amy." Jack would then greet her and say to his wife, "Let me introduce my friends Miss Amy, and Mr. Lambert," which he would do separately, and the matter would be in order.

❦❦❦

Elementary Small Talk.

"Jupiter" is a much invited out young man, of a certain amount of originality, which suffers a terrible amount of straining when called upon to open conversation with ladies to whom he has just been introduced. He finds himself absolutely at a loss to open the conversation satisfactorily, and is tired of repeating the old common places of dances and parties generally. He asks me if I can give him a hint or two as to how to be able to avoid these, and yet not come to be regarded as an unsociable dolt.

❦❦❦

I sympathise with you, "Jupiter." The average conversation, nowadays, at dances and other gatherings, wants very serious reform. I know a young man who is really quite clever, but for years he got the reputation of being a fool, solely because he could not descend to the inanities of drawing-room chatter, and preferred to keep silence. Then light dawned upon him, and he reformed his conversational powers with extraordinary success. Thinking it better to be thought a conspicuous fool than an insignificant one, he invariably started his talk by making a statement which puzzled his partner. On one occasion, at an evening at home, when people were sitting round the room in an absurd semi-circle, he remarked that "the floor was good, wasn't it?"

❦❦❦

Seeing that the floor was carpeted, and not particularly well, his partner wondered what he was driving at and asked him. "Oh, I beg your pardon," he replied "I thought we were at a dance. I should have said that 'we were having excellent weather,' or something of the kind. One has to, you know." The girl laughed, and, though thinking him a little mad, soon begun chatting with him, till both developed an intimacy extraordinary to behold. I advise "Jupiter" to try something of the kind.

Can She Sue the Sweep?

"Vindictive" was making marmalade when a huge lump of soot came down the chimney into her pan and spoilt fourteen pounds of marmalade; she had had the chimney swept two days previously, and wants my advice as to whether she can sue the sweep and recover the amount of the damage.———I am afraid it would cost more than the marmalade was worth, "Vindictive." You can make the very best at the rate of twopence per pound, so you see your loss only amounted to two shillings and fourpence all told. Cheer up, and make some more.

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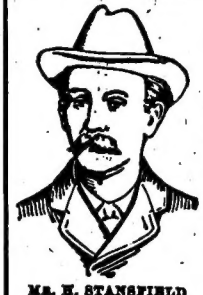

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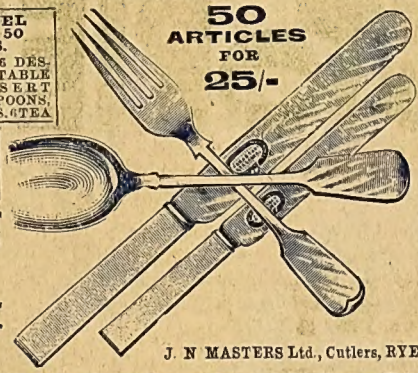

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